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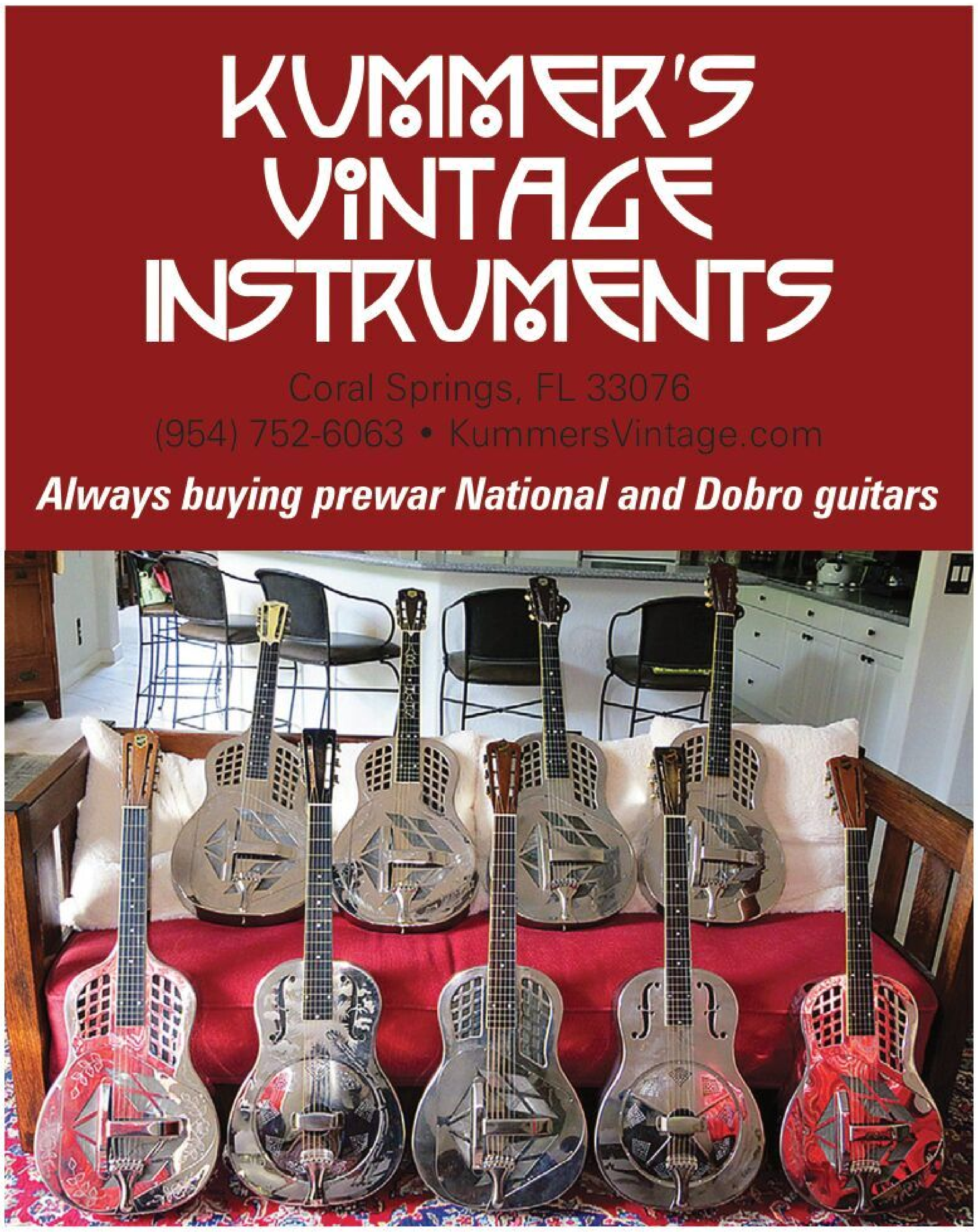
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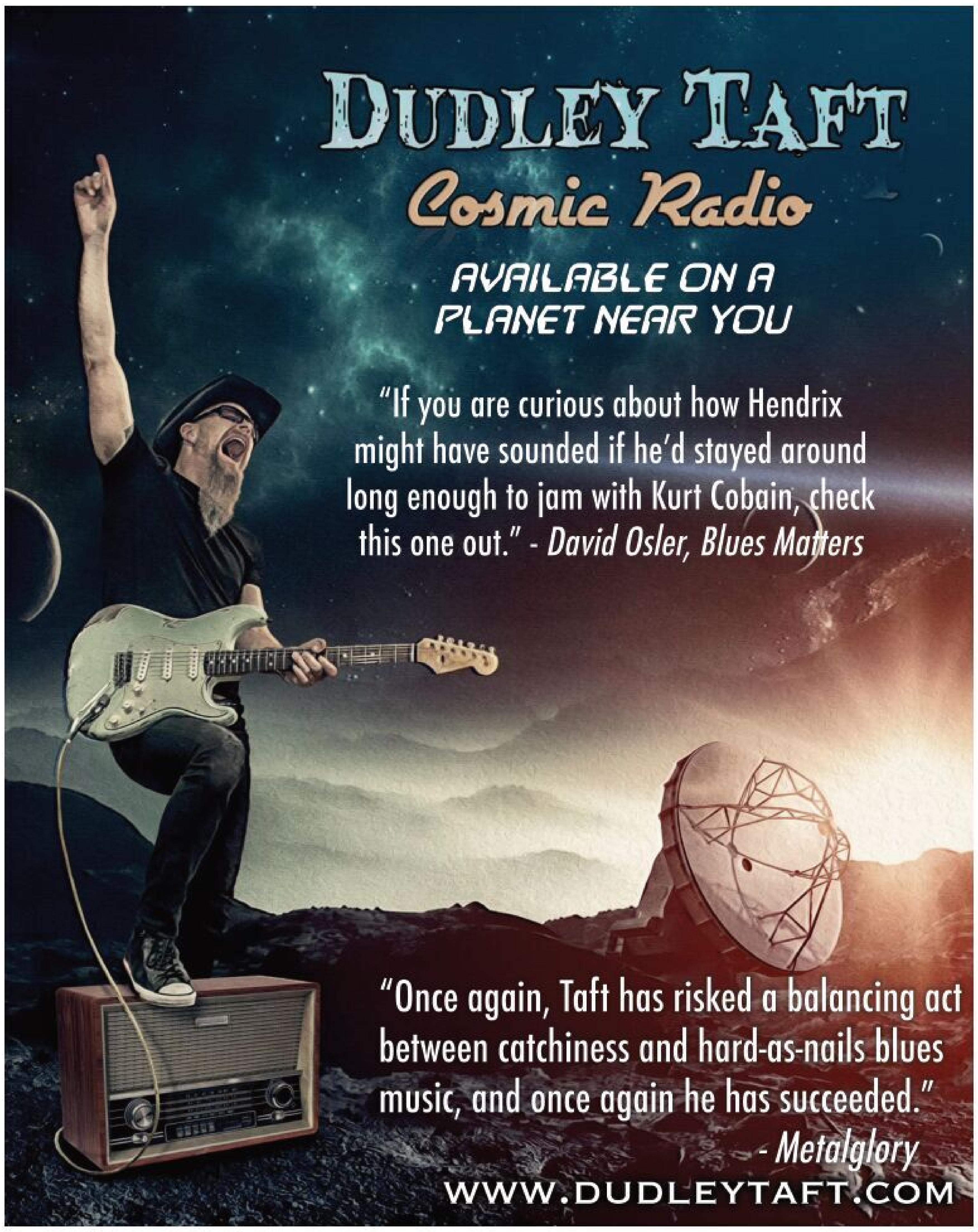
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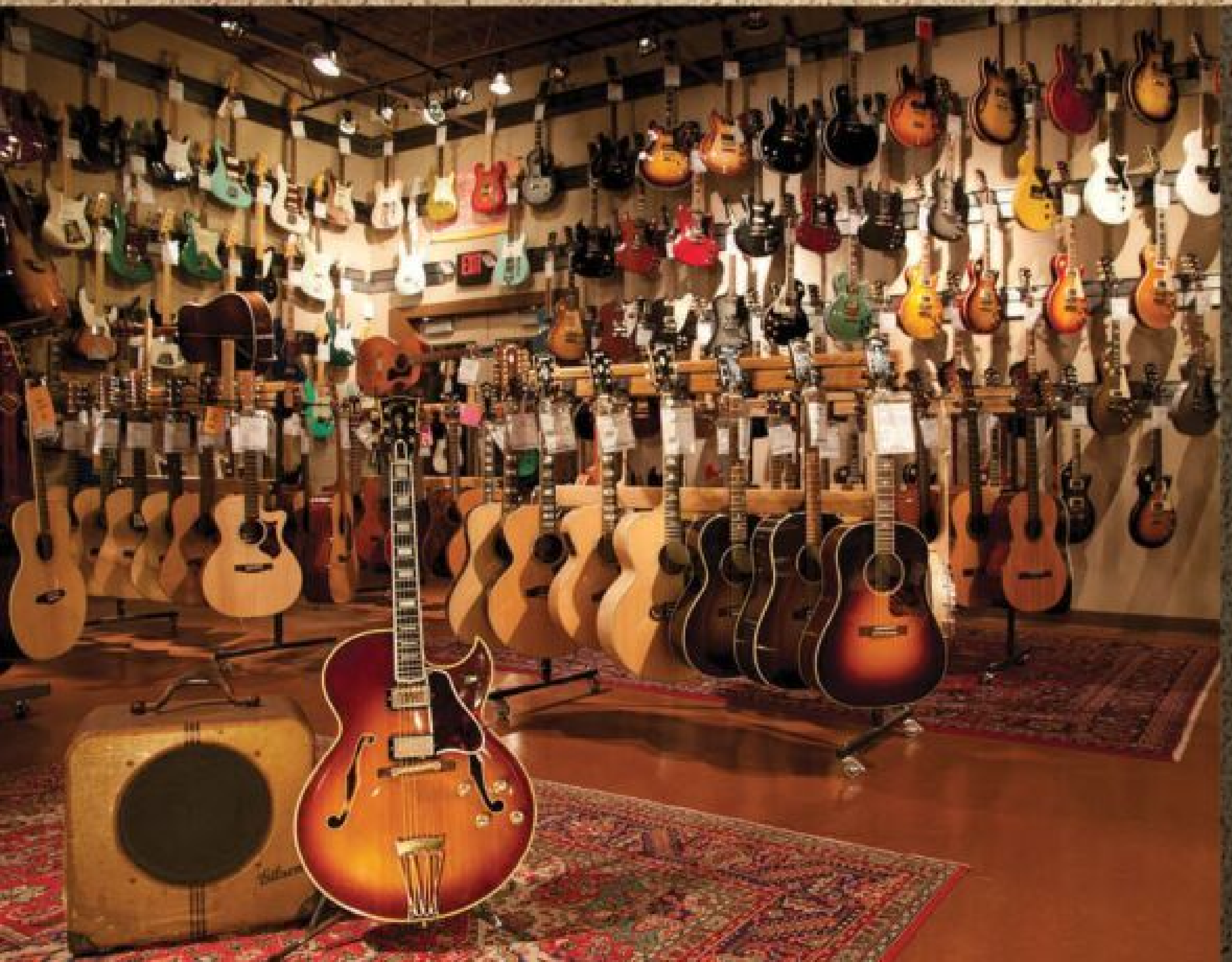

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| *By Rusty Russell*

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Photos: COVER: Barney Kessel's Gibson ES-350: Patrick Tregenza. Greg Martin: Christie Goodwin. **THIS PAGE:** Jay Jay French: Tim Tronckoe.

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Paul McCartney in the Wings era, with his Yamaha BB-1200, hamming with Stevie Wonder on drums.

GUITAR ICONS AUCTION RAISES $2 MILLION

Music Rising, a charity co-founded by U2 guitarist The Edge and producer Bob Ezrin, raised more than $2 million via its "Guitar Icons" auction, December 11 in Los Angeles. Highlights included a Fender Custom Shop Strat used by The Edge on "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" ($496,100), a Yamaha BB-1200 used by Paul McCartney in Wings ($471,900), a Telecaster played by Lou Reed ($72,600), a Flying V played by Lenny Kravitz ($42,350), and a Gretsch Irish Falcon played by Joe Walsh ($48,400). Proceeds will provide funding for musicians in the Gulf Coast region, who have suffered financially through the pandemic.

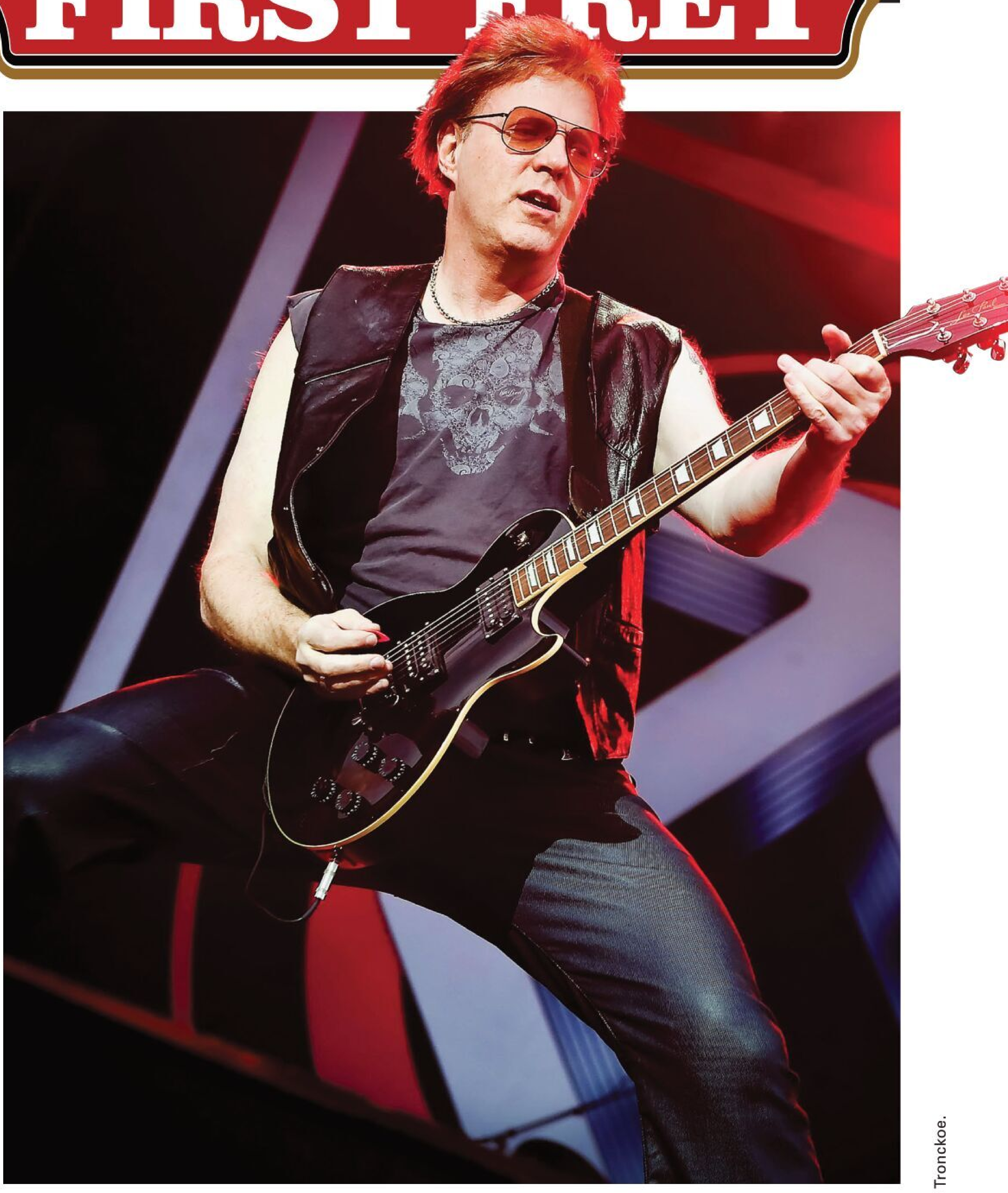
SANTANA UNDERGOES HEART PROCEDURE

After undergoing an unscheduled heart procedure on November 27, Carlos Santana (*VG*, January '22) cancelled eight December concerts that were to begin his residency at the Las Vegas House of Blues. "I'm going to to catch up with my health so that I [can] give you 150 percent," he said in a video distributed December 1. The residency will resume in January and is scheduled through May.

OOPS! DEPT.

Last month's feature on the Jabo Arrington Broadcaster (now owned by Vince Gill) failed to include a byline for author Rich Kienzle. *VG* apologizes for the omission.

Also, Jerry Kennedy, whose Martin 00-18 was featured in the December '21 issue, asked *VG* to reinforce that the guitar was not stolen from him; Jerry willingly loaned it to his guitar teacher, Tillman Franks, after which occurred the unfortunate chain of events described in the story.



Paul McCartney: Linda McCartney. Jay Jay French: Tim Tronckoe.

JAY JAY FRENCH

Twisted Tales

There are music-business survivors, and then there's Jay Jay French. Twisted Sister's founder/co-lead guitarist/manager has led a life of wild highs and lows, personally and professionally. Some were common pitfalls, others his alone.

In his book, *Twisted Business: Lessons from My Life in Rock 'N' Roll*, French (with co-writer Steve Farber) combines the Twisted Sister saga and general business advice. While deciding to do a book, French struggled on its focus before realizing it could be both memoir and business-themed.

"Aren't all books about successful business people memoirs *and* business books?" he said. "Their history is imbued in their philosophies. I call mine a 'biz-oir,' and what it does is bridge a pathway of lessons learned and the

pursuit of success in the rock-and-roll business, which are universal. It doesn't matter if you're rock or rap. Doesn't even matter if you're in the music business. It works for *every* business, which is why I do motivational speaking at business conferences; the story I tell is about how to overcome challenges. Don't we all have them all the time? That's all we do – reinvent ourselves over and over. That's what life is about – challenges and reinventing one's self to accommodate them.

"(The book has) practical applications to real issues that have confronted me," he added. "It just so happens it was through the prism of heavy metal, which is a very sexy prism. I screwed up and made mistakes along the way, and I'm brutally honest about my mistakes. I survived them because I wasn't on drugs or alcohol, which allowed me clarity to solve these problems. If you add drugs and alcohol on top of these issues, you're fighting two problems."

French grew up in New York City and became a drug user/dealer in his teens. He quit all drug-related activity cold turkey because he knew it would interfere with his dreams of rock stardom. Twisted Sister formed in 1973, and early members were fired for violating its no alcohol/drugs policy. It took the band 10 years to get a record deal despite nightly selling out large clubs in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, some seating 5,000 people.

"The difference between Twisted Sister and other bands is we'd get a rejection letter during the day and play for 2,500 people that night. We couldn't have sucked that bad," French chuckled. "Fans kept us fueled while we were going through that. It was validation. We had value."

Ultimately, they signed with Atlantic Records in the U.K., even as its U.S. president, Doug Morris, openly despised them. Morris finally promised to give Twisted Sister a promotional push for 1984's *Stay Hungry,* which then produced the iconic hits "We're Not Gonna Take It" and "I Wanna Rock." MTV ate up the videos.

These days, a recording artist doesn't need a record company to release music thanks to the internet and social media.

"Given our history, when I watch shows like 'The Voice' or 'American Idol,' and the 21-year-old winner looks into the camera and says, 'I'd like to thank my fans for sticking with me for 15 weeks,' I want to throw up!" French said. "Today, the good news is, anybody can make a record. The bad news is, anybody can make a record. How do you get heard? That's the problem. It's a different world."

Twisted Sister today remains a financial success; the two *Stay Hungry* classics are among the most licensed songs of all time, and French has won legal ownership of the Twisted Sister name, with the vision of licensing its music.

"If you look at the four big bands that came out in '73 – AC/DC, Judas Priest, Kiss, and us – it's a pretty heavy-duty class. We have the most-recognizable songs in the world, and that's just a fact," French said. "You can hate the band – I don't *care* if you hate us – but if you ask a 10-year-old kid to sing a Kiss song he may not know one, but if you go, 'We're not gonna take it!' he's going to sing our song. ['We're Not Gonna Take It' and 'I Wanna Rock'] are worldwide. They have transcended everything."

Though the cruel parts of the music business hit French harder than most, he has allowed himself to enjoy success.

"Once in a while, I think, 'Wow, that was an accomplishment.' And then I get crazy and go, 'What am I going to do next?' The price one pays for success is nothing you could ever anticipate. Number one, it took 20 years and six months from the time I saw the Beatles on TV until I had a gold record. There's no way I could've anticipated that. The second thing is the price one pays and the trip one takes down the road is impossible to know until you live it." ***– Bret Adams***

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IN MEMORIAM

EMMETT CHAPMAN

Emmett Chapman, inventor of the Chapman Stick, died at his home on November 1. He was 85 and had battled cancer.

An innovative jazz guitarist, Chapman played a long-scale nine-string guitar with a lever he called the "wild string" that created different tuning intervals. In 1969, he began using the "free hands" two-handed tapping method, and to better implement the style, created a 10-string instrument that hung on the player more vertically and had a fretboard that extended nearly to the end of its narrow body. Dubbed the Stick, its five bass strings and five melody strings were situated with the lowest in the middle of the fretboard.

In 1974, Chapman and his wife, Jutta, founded Stick Enterprises to manufacture the instrument, eventually producing more than 6,000 of them. It is now being run by his daughter, Grace, who has been its quality-control manager for more than a decade.

Chapman is survived by Jutta, their two daughters, and a brother. – ***Ward Meeker***

BILL CONKLIN

Bill Conklin, founder of Conklin Guitars, passed away at his home in Springfield, Missouri, on October 29. He was 58.

Conklin began playing bass at age 12. Passionate about music and art, he would sketch unusually shaped guitars and basses, and first built an instrument as a senior in high school. Interest in it led him to take on repair work and modifications for friends and other players. At just 20, he started Conklin Guitars, continuing with repair work but also supplementing orders for custom builds with refinish jobs, pickup and vibrato installs, and other mods. In 1988, he married and moved to Springfield to open a new shop where he focused on building, his designs guided in part by customers who wanted unusual shapes, exotic woods, and unique configurations like his extended-range basses with seven, eight, nine, and 11 strings.

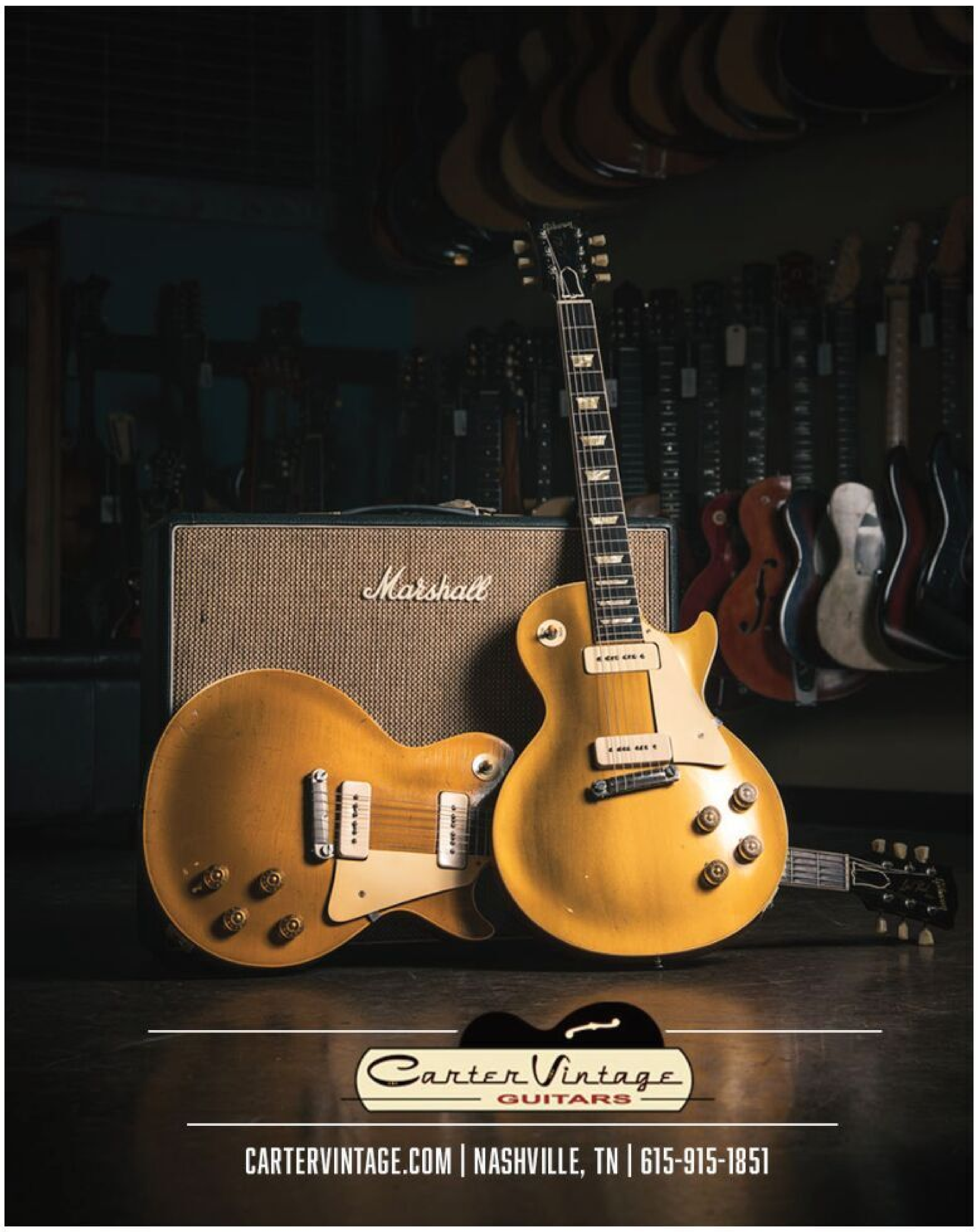
Conklin is survived by his wife, Teresa, three stepchildren, and extended family. – ***Ward Meeker***

RICH FIFIELD

Rich Fifield, guitarist in the '60s surf band The Astronauts, died November 16. He was 78.

Formed in 1956 as The Stormtroupers by four high-school friends in Boulder, Colorado, the band changed its name after Fifield joined in '61. They gained a strong local following, then began touring the Midwest and into Texas. Their first single, "Come Along Baby" led to being signed by RCA Records, which released the instrumental "Baja" which reached *Billboard*'s Hot 100 in early/mid '63.

The band's music was more-popular in Japan, where, in '64 they outsold The Beach Boys (five albums and three singles eventually made the Top 10, with "Over The Sun" going to #1) and toured with The Ventures. After two members were drafted, the band began a series of personnel changes before it split in '68. For a time, Fifield and other members performed in the U.S. as Sunshine Ward, after which Fifield co-founded the psychedelic-rock band Hardwater, which recorded one album. – ***Ward Meeker***



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WARREN HAYNES

Lights-Out Blues

Blues is the beating heart of Gov't Mule, and guitarist/bandleader Warren Haynes can play them lights-out. Standing as evidence is his work on their latest album, *Heavy Load Blues*, a rugged mix of songs that pays tribute without sacrificing the band's sonic mission; Haynes' playing is indeed heavy, and so is the music.

What compelled you to make a blues album?

For several years, I've been making lists of cover songs I might want to do. I wanted the album to be stuff I'd never done before – the exception is "Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody's Home." We have an arrangement of that we've worked up through the years and play quite often, so I thought it would be cool to include it. Otherwise, I wanted stuff we've never tackled before. More importantly, I wanted it to sound like it was recorded when all our favorite blues records were made. If you look at 1955 to '75, that's the window when my favorite blues records were recorded. I wanted to capture that vibe, from a sonic standpoint.

Did you use vintage amps?

We set up a *whole bunch* of vintage guitars, amps, microphones, and analog tape. The amps that got the most use were a Gibson Skylark from the late '50s, a Gibson Vanguard from the late '50s, and an old Supro. I also used a tweed Fender Pro and an old Alessandro that George built for me – a small one with just Volume and Tone and one 8" speaker. I also used a Gibson Goldtone.

On "Wake Up Dead," you can hear the room interacting with your guitar and amp.

We were in a small room set up with every instrument bleeding into every microphone – no separation, no headphones, recorded live with the vocals coming through a monitor through an amp to make it even more old-school sounding. We'd set up two or three amps patched together, and I'd put one in the room with me. The other two were in the big room, miked from a distance. One had built-in reverb or I'd use my Fender tank from the '60s, which Billy Gibbons gave me.

We basically set up to make two records at once – a normal Gov't Mule album in the big room, and a blues record in the small adjoining room. We'd go in early to do the regular Mule until about nine o'clock in the evening, then take a break and go to the adjoining room and play blues the rest of the night. It turned out to be a cool recipe.

Your inner Albert King is unleashed on "Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody's Home."

On the deluxe version of the album, we do the old Savoy Brown tune "Street Corner Talking," where I played a Flying V that Grace Potter gave me. I went a little into the Albert thing on that, too.

Who are your top blues influences?

If we're going early on, it's Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and Elmore James. A little later, B.B., Freddie, and Albert King. Junior Wells and Buddy Guy. I'm a big Son House fan, as well; that comes out on "Black Horizon."

Talk about the guitars you used on the album.

On "Blues Before Sunrise," I played an old Danelectro Pro from the late '50s. I've used it on several recordings. I used another Dano on "Make It Rain" – a parts guitar of two or three put together. I also played my '59 Les Paul, my '61 ES-335, a '63 345, and a '67 355 that Gregg Allman gave me. On "Heavy Load," I played a 1929 Gibson L-1 like the Robert Johnson guitar. On "Black Horizon," I played a '39 National steel-body. I also played my signature guitar on one song and a Custom Shop tobacco sunburst Les Paul.

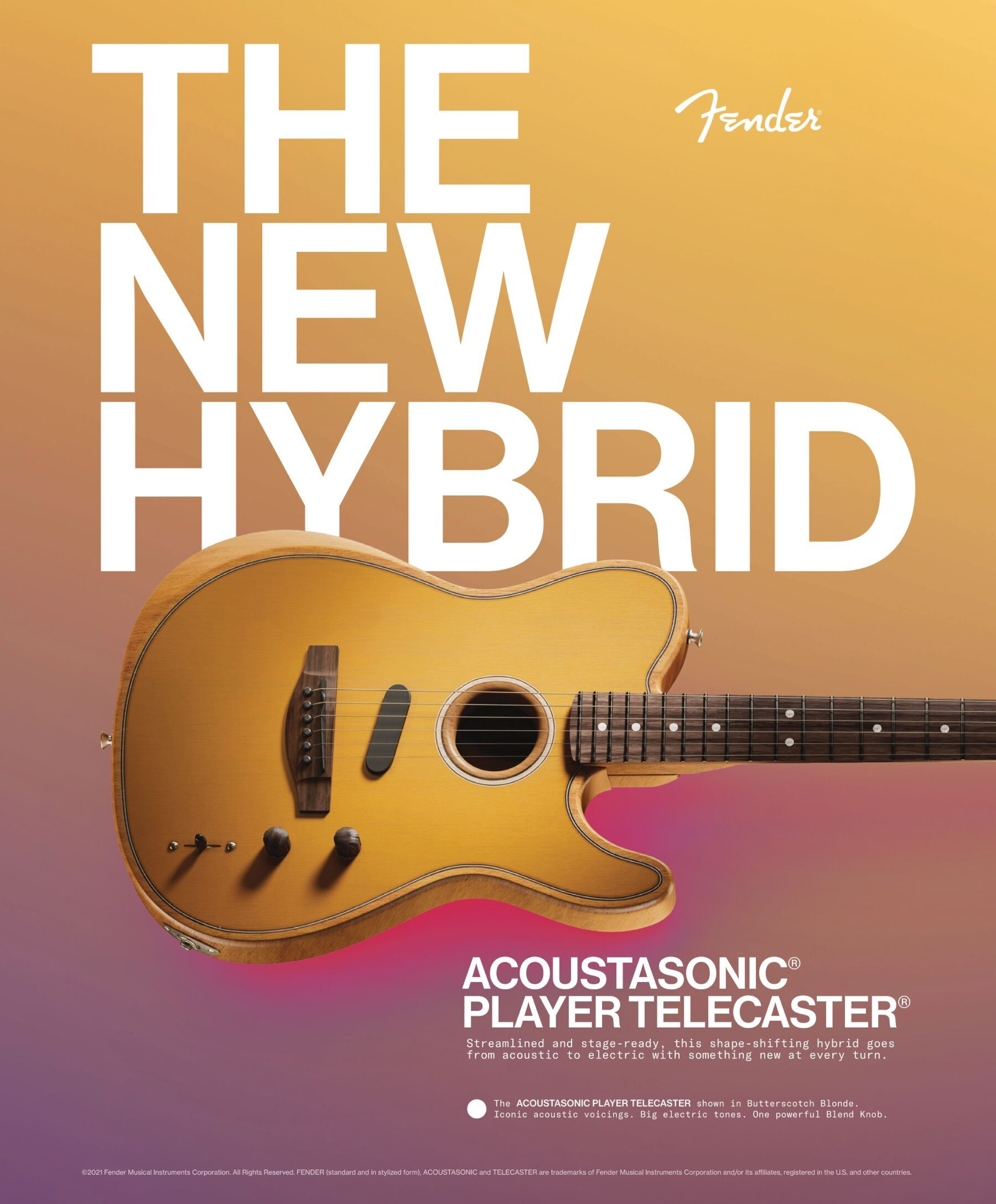
You whip out the slide on "Heavy Load."

From a traditional blues standpoint, Elmore James was a big influence on everybody. The deluxe version has the Muddy tune "Long Distance Call." When I was growing up, Duane Allman, Lowell George, David Lindley, Ry Cooder, Bonnie Raitt, and Johnny Winter were all slide players I really dug.

What's up next for you and the Mule?

The regular Gov't Mule album will be the follow-up to *Revolution Come... Revolution Go*. It's original material, most written during the lockdown. It'll be released sometime this year. I had so much material that making the two records together and not dwelling on one or the other was refreshing. I wouldn't recommend it on a normal basis, but coming out of the pandemic turned out to be the right thing. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Warren Haynes: Jay Sanone.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GREG MARTIN

Facts of Life

The pandemic knocked the Kentucky Headhunters' 2020 plans out of whack, just like every other artist. It's the primary reason *That's a Fact Jack!* is the boisterous, Grammy-winning Southern rock/country band's first studio album in five years.

Lead guitarist/co-founder Greg Martin and segment host on *Vintage Guitar*'s Youtube channel, explained how the band started 2020, until Covid-19 drove plans into the ditch.

"Our last official studio album was *On Safari*, and that was 2016," Martin said. "Then we did *Live at the Ramblin' Man Fair* in '19, and that had outtakes from some old Johnnie Johnson tracks we had laying around. We hadn't started on an album in 2020 at all. Basically, our lives have been the same for years – we go out and tour. That's the way *my* life has been for years, because I started on the road with a country artist, Ronnie McDowell, back in 1981. So, I've been on a bus for 40 years."

The Headhunters played a handful of dates early in 2020 and talked about a new album. Then the pandemic hit.

"The next thing you know, pretty much our whole year (of tour dates) had fallen out. We *did* end up playing 10 shows, then in November I tested positive for Covid and had to isolate for 10 days, so I missed the last show. Chris Robertson of Black Stone Cherry subbed for me. My case wasn't that bad. I was very lucky."

When work started on *That's a Fact Jack!* in February of '21, Martin, rhythm guitarist Richard Young, bassist Doug Phelps, and drummer Fred Young approached it differently.

"Everybody took their ideas straight into the studio and we worked them up on the floor, then hit 'Record.' There was no pre-production. Usually, we'd get together and hash-out ideas first," explained Martin. "This one took a little longer since we weren't as sharp, because we weren't playing together (on tour)."

Was it scary to work that way?

"Sure it was, but there was an urgency to the music that came out that wouldn't have otherwise. We were in our pattern – tour, then do an album. But, in 2020, we didn't know *what* was going to happen. When I had Covid, I didn't even hold a guitar, and there are guitars all over the house. My calluses were soft for the first time in *years*. So, yes, it was a little concerning going in. But, with not really having a plan, there's a freshness about the way it was done."

One thing the Headhunters didn't do early in the pandemic was record remotely; rather, they worked together in the studio.

Among the changes was a shift in lead-vocal responsibilities.

"Normally, Doug does the lion's share of lead vocals – he's the official singer – and Richard does three or four," he said. "On this album, Fred did a couple, and I even jumped in on a song I wrote that we'd recorded as Itchy Brother back in 1973, called 'Shotgun Effie.' So, the album is eclectic. Stylistically, it covers a lot of different ground."

Martin, who has hosted "The LowDown HoeDown" weekly radio show on Louisville's WDNS-FM for 20 years (streaming at wdnsfm.com), is right about the variety. "How Could I" is country-rock honky tonk. A touch of '60s pop coats "Cup of Tea." The rockin' side of the band jumps out on the title track and "Heart and Soul." A reworked cover of Rick Derringer's "Cheap Tequila" is included, Martin said, after Fred Young lobbied for years to do the song. "Let's All Get Together and Fight" is a hysterical country tune about a family Christmas.

Several guitars are heard on *That's a Fact Jack!* Martin mostly played his '58 Les Paul Standard but also used a '62 ES-335, Gretsch Silver Jet, '57 Strat, Breedlove C25 Passport, a Ventura Dan Armstrong copy from the '70s, for slide parts, and Young's Alvarez Yairi acoustic. Richard Young played a '52 Tele, a White Falcon, and Martin's '64 ES-335 that once belonged to Muscle Shoals session ace Travis Wammack.

Thirty-plus years after 1989's debut, *Pickin' on Nashville*, was a surprise critical and commercial hit, a career highlight occurred in December when they played their first hit, "Dumas Walker," the Johnson collaboration "Stumblin'," and "Let's All Get Together and Fight" at the Grand Ole Opry. Bill Monroe had approached Roy Acuff about having them on when "Dumas" first charted, but their long hair was a deal-breaker.

"Doug and I did the Opry back in the '80s with Ronnie, but his was a first for the band playing there," said Martin. ***– Bret Adams***

Greg Martin: Christie Goodwin.

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DAVE SPECTER

Chicago Deep Dish

There are many styles of blues guitar, from haunting Delta acoustic to volcanic blues-rock. Hailing from the mecca of Chicago, Dave Specter plays electric blues that comes from deep immersion in that city's music and culture. Specter's latest album, *Six String Soul*, is a 30-year retrospective delivering an authentic sound that can't be faked; his tone is edgy and wide as a Mack truck, with serious vibrato and string bends. We asked the Windy City ace for the ingredients that go into his formidable six-stringing.

How did you get on a blues path, despite growing up in the FM rock era?

Growing up in Chicago was key. My parents loved folk music and acoustic-blues artists like Leadbelly and Big Bill Broonzy. Having an older brother and sister who'd come home and tell me about seeing Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy and Junior Wells, Koko Taylor – even buying schnapps for Howlin' Wolf – further led me on a path deep into the blues.

What was some of the earliest authentic blues that grabbed your attention?

Hearing Muddy and Big Bill on the radio grabbed me in a very powerful way. Growing up with the Beatles and Rolling Stones, and *then* hearing the soul and power of deep blues, really woke me up and spoke to me like no other music I'd heard before.

But you didn't start playing until you were 18 years old, which is relatively late.

I picked up guitar the summer before I went to college, after meeting a group of musicians and artists at school. Once I heard Chicago blues shows on campus and in clubs, I immersed myself in guitar records and practiced intensely. My influences were Magic Sam, Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, T-Bone Walker, Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Steve Freund, Kenny Burrell, and Leo Nocentelli, to name a few.

You started recording for Delmark in 1991, the year after Stevie Ray Vaughan's death. Was he an influence?

I found more common ground with Jimmie Vaughan than Stevie, though Stevie's first album made a very strong impression. We all loved Strats and I always went for a darker, fuller Strat sound. Keith Richards was my first guitar hero, but I soon fell in love with blues players. I was already a Chicago-blues purist in my early days; later, one of my first tours was with [Howlin' Wolf guitarist] Hubert Sumlin and drummer Sam Lay.

"Blues On My Mind" suggests jazz. How does that mix in your approach?

I always loved blues players who took a more melodic and swingin' approach, combined with a relaxed intensity in their playing. B.B., T-Bone, and Gatemouth Brown are perfect examples of that jazz hybrid and all are big influences. I've read interviews with Otis Rush and Jimmy Johnson about how much they loved Kenny Burrell, Wes Montgomery, and George Benson, and helped lead me into the jazz/blues guitar world. Blues and jazz are brother and sister – when they get along and complement each other, it's a beautiful thing.

You get a huge guitar tone, which suggests heavier strings. What do you use?

Tone is mostly about touch and feel, but yes, I do use a custom set of heavier GHS Boomers – .011, .013, .017, .030, .040, .050.

What are your main guitars?

I started as a Strat player using '57 reissues, American Standards, and an original '57 refin. I also had a '55 ES-175, but switched to Epiphone Rivieras with mini-humbuckers and ES-135 and ES-137 Custom models. Lately, I've been playing Jazzmasters – my favorite is a reissue '65 Thin Skin in Aztec Gold. I use Lollar, Fralin, or stock pickups in my Jazzmasters.

What about amps and effects?

I started out using '60s Super Reverbs, then switched to a tweed Bassman or Victoria. I've recorded with a couple Vibroluxes and lately have been using a Super Reverb and a Victoria Golden Melody.

I didn't use effects until about 12 years ago, but now, my main pedal is a Voodoo Labs Sparkle Drive. I also use various Hammond-organ simulators like the Keeley Dyno My Roto, and a Dunlop mini-wah.

How hard do you push amps?

I never really crank up past 5 or 6 in the studio.

Do you have any tips for rock guitarists who want to find something closer to authentic Chicago blues in their playing?

The key is to immerse yourself in the music. Listen to Muddy, early Buddy, Otis Rush, Magic Sam, Albert, Freddie, B.B. – and listen closely to their tone and touch. You'll hear beautiful, clean, soulful tones with edge and intensity; that's my favorite feeling for the blues. You'll also hear perfect examples of bending and vibrato. Sometimes precise and clean, other times crazy and unpredictable – good blues guitar is always powerful, expressive, and soulful. ***– Pete Prown***

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ERIC KRASNO

Always Keepin' On

Groovemeister Eric Krasno continues to push his funky, soul-jazz narrative with guitar front and center. His new record, *Always*, features his vocals embedded within cutting-edge technology and contemporary-retro beats. The founder of Soulive and Lettuce, he has also amassed a slew of producer credits, but *Always* stands as a milestone for documenting a highly successful music career *and* a new family.

A theme in your music is blaxploitation film soundtracks of the '70s.

It's hard not to. I love Curtis Mayfield and all the stuff from that era, but I think he did it the best. There's so much soul and groove in that music. My favorite stuff is when you can combine that groove and that feeling and tell a story at the same time. That's the ultimate music for me.

Your new band is called Eric Krasno & The Assembly, but you and co-producer Otis McDonald recorded *Always* without the band.

Yeah, it's all me and Otis. I'm doing guitars and bass, both of us play keys, and he plays, bass, too. On "Silence," I tracked the harmony solo with myself; I got into that because I was a big Allman Brothers fan and was playing with Derek Trucks a lot. I also played with Oteil Burbridge on his side project and with the Allman Brothers. That song made me compose solos in a simpler way. I'd think ahead and try to play something that was easier to harmonize. That's one of the themes on the record – a lot of the solos have harmony parts.

I met Otis when he did production on a cover of "The Man In Me," by Bob Dylan, that I was working on. It was so good that we did the whole record remotely, sending tracks back and forth. We never met until the end, when we got together on the mixes because things opened up. I never thought it would sound so live. It's a very analog-sounding album, but couldn't be more digital. We're both influenced by artists like Funkadelic and even D'Angelo, and "Good Thing" has a lot of Herbie Hancock elements. That's me playing the Fender Rhodes – a keyboard solo for the first time on record.

How did you make that chilly tremolo sound on "So Cold?"

I used an old Boss TR-2, but it was all about the fuzz, which I put before the tremolo, and put some nice reverb in the output. I used the MXR Super Badass Variac Fuzz, which is great; I have a lot of fuzz pedals, but keep that on my board because I can get a lot of tones out of it. Also, you can make it sound like it's using less voltage – something I learned from Doyle Bramhall, II. He has a whole rig where he gets all his batteries at half power. I was like, "Wow!" His whole thing is you can't plug in at a full nine volts. I don't go quite that deep, but the Super Badass mimics that sound.

What inspired the envelope filter solo on "Lost Myself?"

I'm on Provogue Records, and they signed Maceo Parker, who I've worked with. I was going to have Maceo play the solo on "Lost Myself" because it had all these horns. But I played the solo as a joke – I was faking it, trying to be Maceo on guitar (laughs). I sent it to Otis, and he was like, "Naw, man. You gotta keep that." So, we kept my solo. The envelope filter is the closest thing to getting that Maceo sound.

Was there a go-to guitar for this record?

For most of it, I was using the PRS Silver Sky that John Mayer gave me. I got into a Strat vibe, and the Silver Sky nails it; I got addicted to that guitar. Toward the end, I used a D'Angelico a bit, and for acoustic stuff I used a Rockbridge. That's my signature Ibanez on "Hold Tight."

What's coming up?

The Assembly is on the road next year, hitting it hard, playing festivals. I'm also the music director for a few events where I'll be working with Chaka Khan, Trombone Shorty, Jackie Greene, and Marcus King. Soulive is getting back together for two short runs. So it's going to be very busy, and between all of it, I have a one-year-old son. ***– Oscar Jordan***

Eric Krasno: Shervin Lainez.

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GRAHAM DECHTER

Post-War Perfection

Since his debut at age 19, Graham Dechter has rekindled a post-war jazz sound, effortlessly swinging and always in the pocket. On his latest, *Major Influences*, he evokes iconic names like Pass, Ellis, Farlow, and Montgomery, employing a command of technique and melodic jazz with a dash of sweet blues. We caught up with him to get the details.

Your improv style is very positive and swinging – that optimistic post-war feeling of Herb Ellis, Barney Kessel, and Joe Pass comes through.

Thanks. My guitar teachers – Jim Fox, Bob Sneider, and Larry Koonse – had a huge impact on my playing. In addition to the three you mentioned, other major influences were Wes Montgomery, Jim Hall, Freddie Green, Grant Green, Ed Bickert, and my present day hero, Peter Bernstein. Pete's playing is unmatched.

You started on violin. How did you make the transition to guitar?

That came as a result of wanting to prove something to a bully in grade school who played guitar and made fun of me for playing violin. I wanted to learn guitar and outplay him in two weeks. I don't know if I accomplished that, but when you're 12 years old and someone picks on you, it can either be very debilitating or very motivating. After two weeks, I fell in love with the guitar and never looked back.

How did you discover jazz?

I grew up with jazz in our house and, after falling in love with Wes Montgomery's *Boss Guitar*, I began to realize that guitar wasn't just a rock or pop instrument, but a viable jazz one, too. As far as understanding harmony, it's a never-ending journey. I was blessed to have great teachers who really taught me the nuts and bolts of the most-common chord progressions and how to navigate them.

Hard-bop drummer Art Blakey is suddenly hip again, and your cut "Minor Influence," pays homage to his music.

Art Blakey is – and *always* will be – hip! I essentially wrote the tune as an homage not only to Art, but to many of the great musicians who came up through his Jazz Messengers, as well as the classic Blue Note recordings of the '50s and '60s. I was inspired by Art's unrelenting big beat and the hard-driving sensibilities of pianist Benny Green, most notably his performance on his own tune, "Bu's March."

"Billy's Dilemma" is a barnburner. How did you achieve that picking speed and cleanliness at such quick tempos?

I worked on some technique-specific exercises when I was younger, but what really got me more comfortable playing fast tempos was learning the vocabulary of great jazz horn players, pianists, and guitar players who have played at those tempos. You have to trick your mind into believing that what you're playing is not actually "fast," but just another tempo. The moment you make a big deal out of it, the more likely it is you'll tense up, and that's the absolute last thing you want to do at brisk tempos. You want to stay as relaxed as possible.

What gear did you use on the album?

An Andersen StreamLine 16 archtop with a John Caruthers custom single-coil pickup. Also, a '65 Fender Vibrolux and an Xotic RC Booster for tone and EQ manipulation. I use D'Addario roundwound strings, .012-.052, but replace the E and B with a .013 and .017.

How does one make a living as a jazz guitarist?

I think it depends on who the guitarist is and what their strengths are. In training for the guitar chair in the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra, I had to become an expert in playing rhythm a la Freddie Green in the Count Basie Orchestra. Because of this, certain artists, such as Michael Bublé, have called on me to play on their albums because they wanted that style of guitar on their recordings. The bottom line is if you set out to be the best at what you do and wind up achieving a high level of mastery, others will notice and you'll always have work.

Classic jazz guitar is having a bit of a renaissance with fine young players like Dan Wilson and Pasquale Grasso (*VG*, November '21). How does jazz guitar relate in the 21st century?

I think people will always be able to relate to and enjoy great music, no matter the genre. Pasquale and Dan – two of my favorite modern guitarists – have a timeless aesthetic to their sound and approach. I'm cut from the same cloth, but as you'll notice, we all sound very much like ourselves. In my opinion, there's nothing hipper and more modern than getting to experience music being created in real time, whether you're a musician or a listener. That's precisely what jazz is – music of the moment. ***– Pete Prown***

Graham Dechter: Art Pazornik.

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ERIC GALES

Journey to Love

The latest from Eric Gales features the production talents of Joe Bonamassa, Josh Smith, and a face-melting guitar duel, but there's more to Gales than mesmerizing guitar; his artistry runs deep, tempered by hardship, wisdom, redemption, and love. Bonamassa calls Gales "The best blues-rock guitarist in the world today," and on *Crown*, he proves it.

How did you end up working with Joe Bonamassa?

We've been buddies for a while. Josh Smith partnered with Joe on producing stuff, so that's how that came together. Joe and I have known each other for almost 30 years; when we first met, he opened for me. He was in Bloodline, and I was touring with the Eric Gales Band. Not too long later, his career skyrocketed. I did my thing for a couple of years and veered into some pretty bad things. Luckily, thank God, I survived. We came back around and rekindled in a very big way.

Your past albums drew on bad experiences, but *Crown* shows there's love in your life.

Everything we talk about on the album is very near and dear to my heart. It speaks to things that have been happening for a long time. We had the opportunity to make something great, and I'm glad it came together like it did. Right before we started, the George Floyd murder happened. A lot of that strayed into the record. I wanted to write about stuff that made a statement and meant something, to have a conversation with the listener on every song. I just so happened to have met a great woman that made me realize there was another way. From there, it's been off to the races.

You also deal with the haters.

They say, "If ain't nobody hatin' on you, then you ain't doin' nothin'." But, hate don't deserve the time of day. Those that do are probably in their mom's basement playin' guitar with Youtube videos. What do they do to change the world night after night by performing their own material, as opposed to being in their mom's basement playin' to cover songs? That message was a general statement for those out there who attempt to come my way.

Somebody told me to shut up and play at one point, which was comparable to Laura Ingraham telling Lebron James to shut up and dribble. You're going to get a reaction from me and everyone who follows me, because everyone knows how open and compassionate me and my wife are about things that need to be talked about. It will be addressed, and in my mind, I just made you famous (laughs).

Did Bonamassa try to influence your sound on the album?

Eighty-five to 90 percent of the solos were cut live. That was kind of new to me. Everything else was nothing I hadn't seen before. We just did it in a slightly different way. When you've done 18 records, you've been through all kinds of processes, waves, and procedures; it's what you do.

It must feel good to know your dueling videos with Bonamassa and Gary Clark, Jr. have gone viral.

It's really awesome getting a proper due after everything I put myself through. I should have been dead a long time ago, and to be here and see myself rise up from the ashes like a phoenix is awesome. When I look back at my life and my story, what a great redemption.

What's your main rig?

I use Magneto Guitars. They have a great feel, and you can play it all day, and it doesn't feel like you've been playing it all day. I have my DV Mark Raw Dawg amp. I have a pedalboard with a Crybaby, Whammy, a Tech 21 delay, my MXR Eric Gales Raw Dawg Overdrive, and an Eric Gales Brute Drive. Even though Joe had a lot of stuff available, he said, "Dude, I'm not here to alter your tone. You got a badass tone. Let's go with what you've got." I'm not the kind of artist Joe has to mold, someone who didn't have familiarity with their own sound. We both believe in great tone.

The opening track, "Death Of Me," is so out-of-the-box.

We were going for a rock song with symphonic classical overtones. I think it came out really well. In the middle, I wanted to go Baroque-ish. I have a liking for classical music, and it was a great way to incorporate that into the song.

What's next?

I'm going to be very prominent next year, so I'm going to rest up in January to get ready for it. It's going to be intense. *– **Oscar Jordan*** VG

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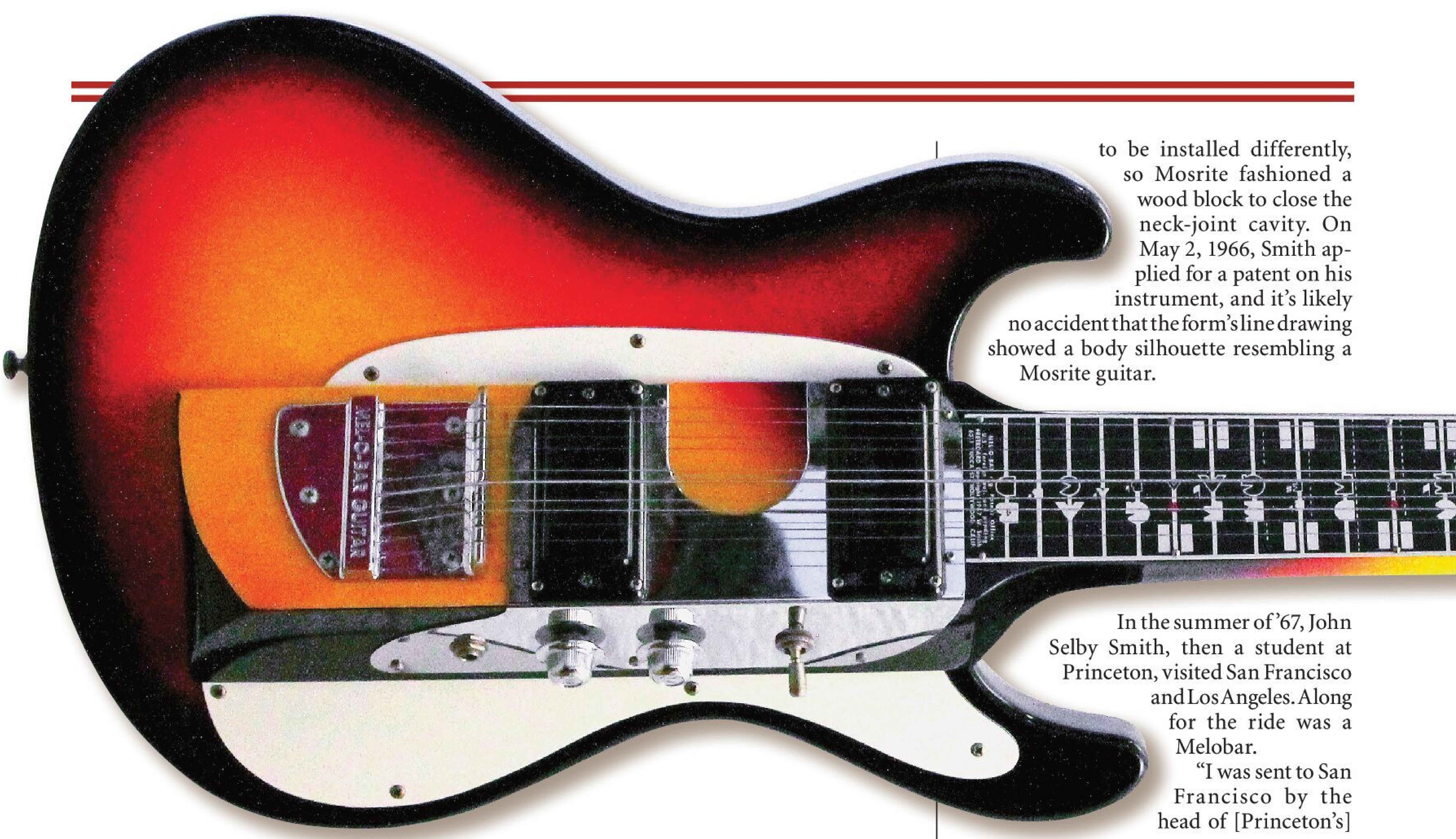


STAND-UP STEEL

The Story of Melobar

BY WILLIE G. MOSELEY

Born in Northern California in 1920, Walt Smith took piano lessons and became a child prodigy on several instruments before developing a love of big-band music and Western swing. Chasing dreams of being a cowboy musician, he focused on guitar and lap steel.

Rebelling against his father's plans for him to pursue a career in business, Walt chose an agrarian lifestyle, moving to an Arizona ranch in 1939 with his new bride, intent on raising cotton. He would eventually return to California, settling near Ojai to run a large ranch.

In the mid '50s, Smith, an inveterate tinkerer, began to develop an idea for a steel guitar that could be played comfortably while standing. He swapped ideas with builders in the area such as Leo Fender and the Dopyera brothers, Ed and Rudy. By the mid '60s, Smith's idea had developed into a few experimental instruments that he branded the Mel-O-Chord, which then evolved to Mel-O-Bar.

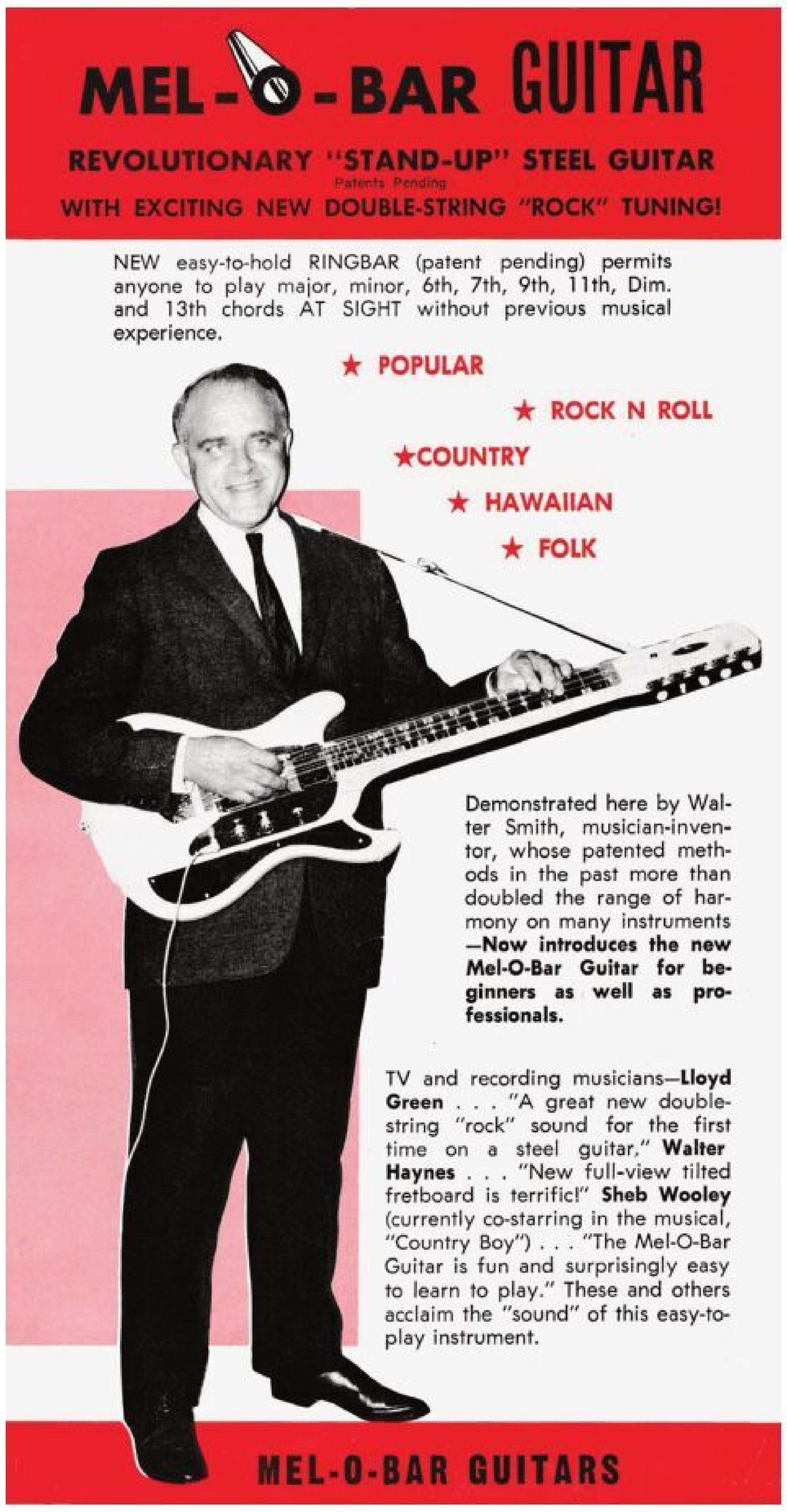
An odd-looking solidbody instrument, the Melobar (now its common name) resembled a Spanish-style electric, but its neck was attached at an angle approximately 45 degrees to the body. Smith contracted with Mosrite, a guitar builder in Bakersfield, to manufacture his innovative instrument.

"Dad wanted real quality, and that's what Mosrite represented," recalled John Selby Smith, one of Walt's five sons. "It also had to do with wanting top pickups."

The agreement gave Mosrite builders an opportunity to use basswood bodies that Semie Moseley had rejected for the Ventures II model in '65. However, the angled neck of the Melobar (usually with 10 strings) had to be installed differently, so Mosrite fashioned a wood block to close the neck-joint cavity. On May 2, 1966, Smith applied for a patent on his instrument, and it's likely no accident that the form's line drawing showed a body silhouette resembling a Mosrite guitar.

In the summer of '67, John Selby Smith, then a student at Princeton, visited San Francisco and Los Angeles. Along for the ride was a Melobar.

"I was sent to San Francisco by the head of [Princeton's]



Walt Smith with his instrument in a mid-'60s Melobar pamphlet.

Photos courtesy of Ted Smith. Mosrite Melobar: Willie G. Moseley.

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psychedelic research institute to report on what was happening in Haight-Ashbury," he recounted of the district, which at the time was ground zero for the hippie movement. "After a crazy three weeks, I hitched to L.A. and, through friends, slipped into showing the Melobar to rock bands – Jefferson Airplane for a week, the Mamas and the Papas, the Grateful Dead for a few days... there were a few others."

The Airplane was recording its third album, *After Bathing at Baxter's*, at RCA's studio in Hollywood.

"We showed up with the guitar, and they were very nice. We spent the day there while they recorded, me teaching Jorma (Kaukonen, lead guitarist) Melobar licks during breaks. He invited us back the next two days. It was an amazing time because they were experimenting with music like I'd never heard before. You hear the Melobar here and there, when there's slide or strange glissando licks."

Several Melobar leads can also be heard on the Airplane's fourth album, 1968's *Crown of Creation*.

"The credits on that album list the Melobar as the 'chicken guitar,'" noted Walt Smith's youngest son, Ted. "Dad was *not* happy about that."

One curious "endorsement" for Melobar germinated during John Selby's L.A. sojourn. While walking through a residential area of Beverly Hills, he saw a woman in distress rushing out of her house. It was Shirley Boone, wife of crooner/actor Pat Boone, whose dog was having puppies and she didn't know what to do. John assisted in the delivery, and his midwifery begat a friendship with the Boone family. A few years later, Pat worked on an endorsement project for the Melobar company.

The Rolling Stones' Brian Jones reportedly experimented with a Melobar, and one legend recounts that just before he died, Jones gave it to Jimmy Page, who was playing with the Yardbirds. Years later, Page called Walt Smith's home late one night, seeking playing tips. He woke Smith from a sound sleep, and Smith referred Page to Ted, who later informed Page that his Melobar was Mosrite-made.

Following his attempt at spreading the word about the new instrument in San Francisco and Los Angeles, John Selby was compelled by his father to work at the Mosrite factory.

Melobars made by Mosrite (right) and Rosac.

"Dad sent me to Bakersfield to oversee things," he said. "By that time, I felt very much a part of Melobar."

More than 50 years later, John Selby still has vivid memories of the Mosrite factory and its personnel, including how his initial misgivings were assuaged.

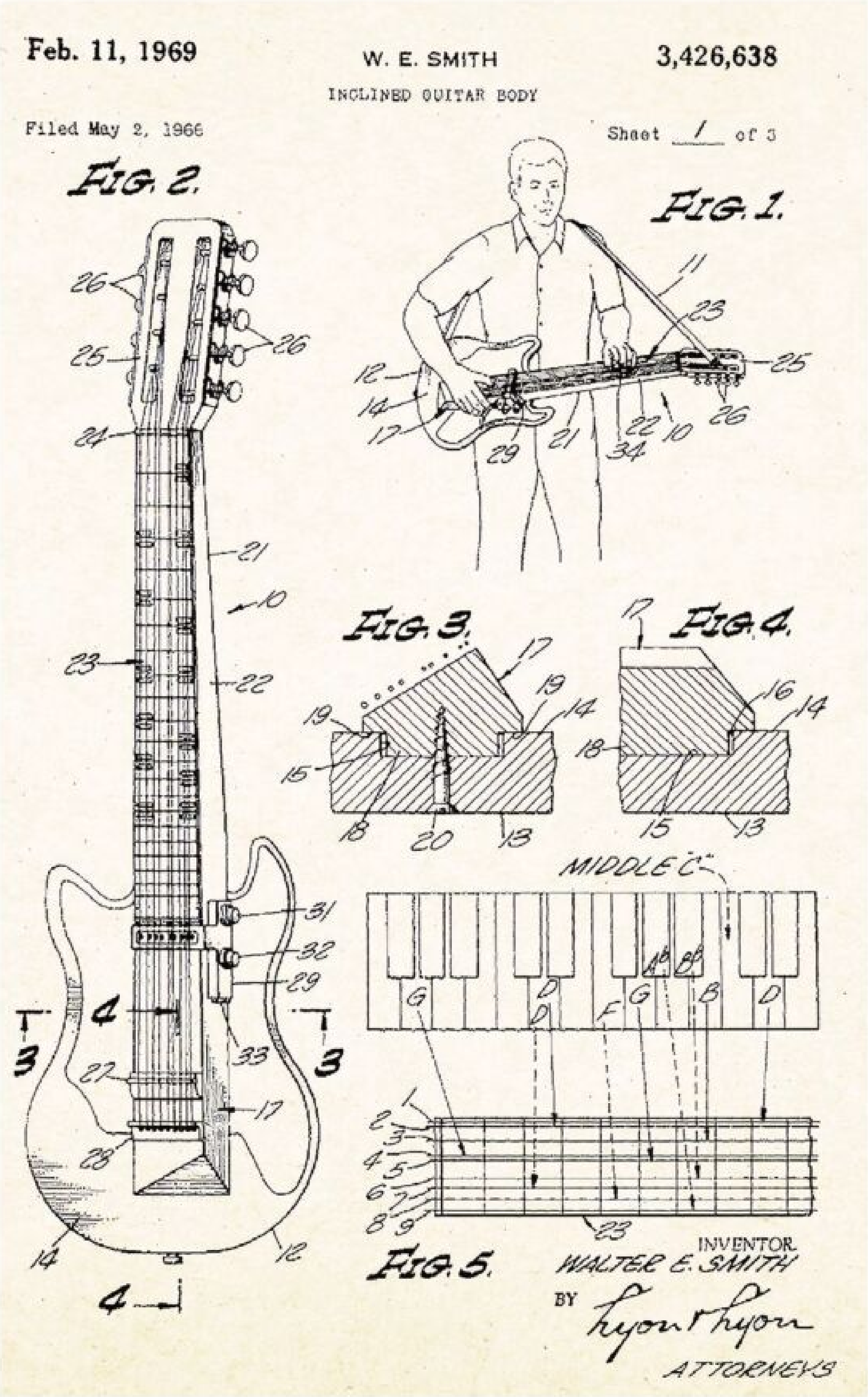
"At first, I felt everything was out of hand and undermanaged," he remembered. "Decisions were made differently than I was used to, but their logic *did* work. The employees had an attitude that was laid back, fun, irreverent, and masterful all at the same time.

"I reported to Dad that the situation was working well – excellent precision and quality control. Almost all the people working on our project were in a corner of a big factory, and most were women. I remember they talked with a strong Okie accent, which I'd grown up with. I would slip back into that accent with them, and right then was when I started singing with the Okie accent. I also realized I'd picked up a prejudice against that accent and quickly threw it away because those women were really good at their work! They took me in with humor, played word games with me, laughed a *lot*, and taught me about growing up in the process. I loved being there."

Though Walt Smith had been adamant that Melobars were to be made from alder, the leftover basswood Ventures II bodies were instead used on most, if not all. Their scale was 23", neck

angles tended to vary slightly from one instrument to another, and they were usually finished in the same three-tone sunburst popular on Mosrite instruments, though others were applied.

Walt Smith's patent for the Melobar was granted February 11, 1969, three days before financial issues closed the Mosrite factory. An estimated 300 had been made.



Patent sketch for the Melobar (above). Pat Boone with a Rosac Melobar, and a Melobar body originally designated to be a Mosrite Ventures II; its neck block is stamped October 25, 1965, but it likely wasn't used until '67.

RISE OF ROSAC

In 1947, Morris Rosenberg and Ben Sacco founded a company to make sacks for agricultural workers. In '59, the Bakersfield-based Sierra Bag Company expanded to create Sierra Iron and Metal, a recycling facility for salvaged metal. By the mid '60s, Rosenberg and Sacco noticed the rise of music and the guitar market, and started Rosac Electronics & Manufacturing to make amplifiers and effects. Among their hires was former Mosrite electronics supervisor Ed Sanner (*VG*, March '14), who, along with other erstwhile Mosrite employees, had been moonlighting at Rosac even before the factory closed. Sanner designed the Nu-Fuzz, an improvement over his Mosrite Fuzzrite, as well as the Distortion Blender.

Almost from the get-go, Rosac manufactured Melobars, and right about the time its version was introduced, Pat Boone recorded the intro for an instructional record included with each instrument.

Rosac Melobars were alder and had a different silhouette, with stubbier cutaway horns that flared outward. The neck was mounted at 45 degrees and the scale was 22$^{3}/_{4}$". They used cheaper tuners, and pickups were made by Paul Barth, who had worked for Magnatone and held one of the first patents for guitar pickups. Again, the most-popular color was a bright three-tone sunburst.

Near the end of 1970, Walt Smith "pulled the plug" (to quote Ted) on Melobar; tired of the L.A. lifestyle, he moved to Idaho. First, though, he built a one-pickup Melobar with a purple finish and gave it to his Ojai neighbor, singer Sheb Wooley (of "Purple People Eater" fame).

Rosac's Melobar production also totaled about 300 instruments. As the plant was closing, John Selby acquired six Melobars and converted them to "blues configuration" with six strings. Stripping the sunburst, he painted three white, three red. A white one wound up with Poco's Rusty Young, who nicknamed it "The Bear" and used it extensively in concert.

Through the '70s, Melobar made a beginner's acoustic version. In 1980, the Smith family committed to a new lineup that included models with bodies shaped like Gibson's Flying V and Explorer, built in Weister, Idaho. Rolling Stones guitarist Ron Wood had one custom-painted by North Carolina artist Wayne Jarrett.

In the late '80s, the company became known as Smith Family Music and was relocated to Sweet, Idaho, where it converted a barn to a cabinet shop in which it also built other styles of Melobar, including doublenecks, lap steels, and resonators. Walt Smith died in 1990, leaving a legacy of 600 instruments that appeal to collectors who appreciate the esoteric, but the ensuing years saw Melobar achieve its greatest success, selling more than 2,000 instruments (one of which appeared in the video for Brooks and Dunn's "Boot Scootin' Boogie"). In '97, they offered an Anniversary Mosrite Melobar honoring Walt and Semie Moseley.

In 2018, Ted Smith posted a video on Youtube, explaining how to convert a 10-string Melobar to six strings and recounting some of the history between Melobar and Mosrite. **VG**

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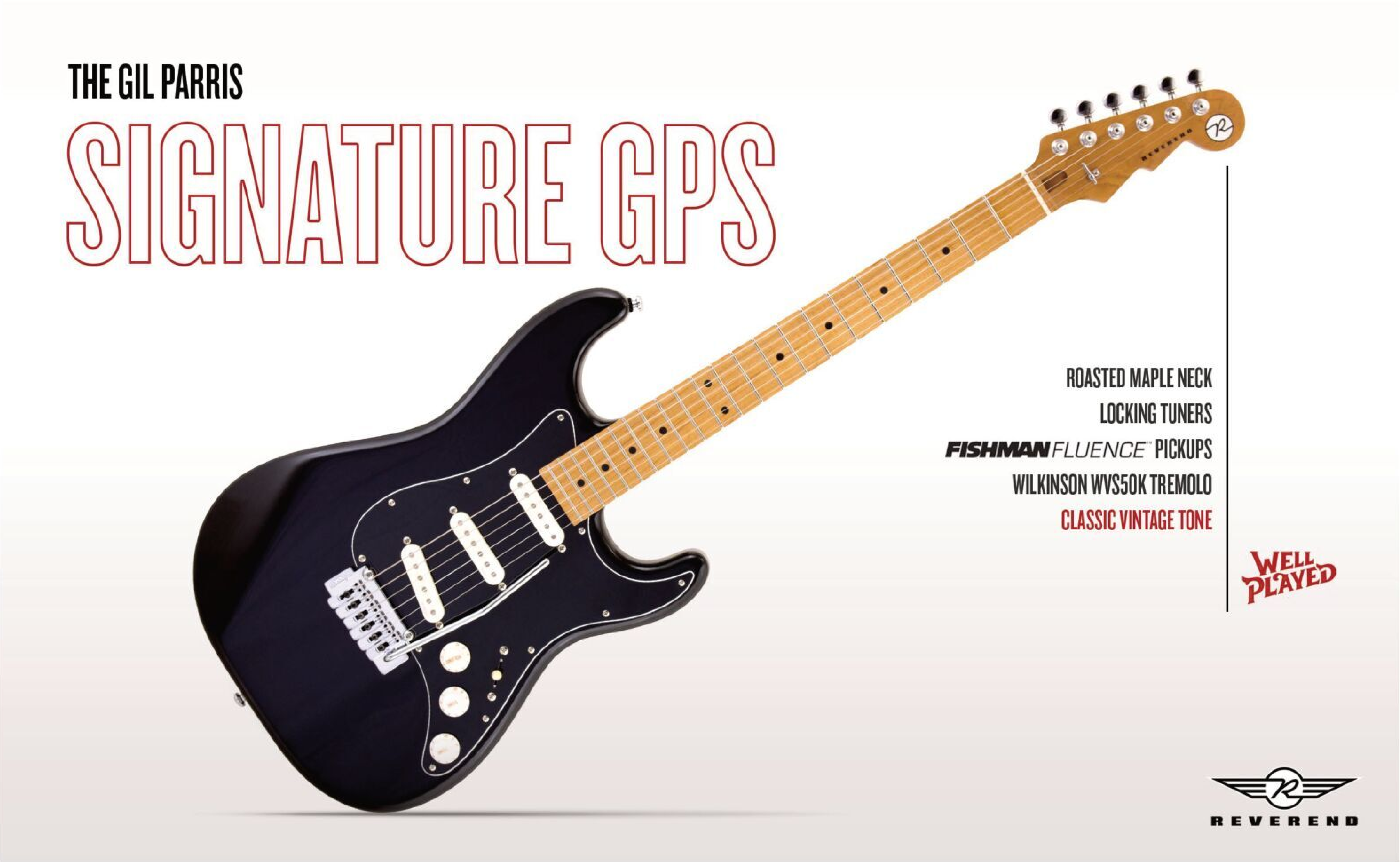
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TRANS-GALACTIC TONEWAY

The Gibson Starfire TR 1000 RVT

BY DAVE HUNTER

Relatively unsung among early entrants to the field of solid-state guitar amplifiers, Gibson was the first high-output, high-quality manufacturer to bring one to market. And while it quickly proved the touted new technology wasn't what many guitarists wanted, that didn't stop others from following suit.

This Starfire was built in '63 – among the first; "TR" indicated transistorized, "RVT" denoted reverb and tremolo, but "1000" was *not* for watts. Presumably, it simply looked big and authoritative.

1963 GIBSON STARFIRE TR 1000 RVT
- Solid-state preamp and output stages
- Controls: Loudness, Reverberation, Bass, Mid-Range, Treble, tremolo Depth and Frequency
- Speaker: single 12" Jensen C12P
- Output: 40 watts RMS

The transistor revolution taking over electronics in the 1950s *should* have also swept the boards in the guitar industry; sandwich-sized transistor radios were bringing information and entertainment to

Amp and photos courtesy of Gregg Poe.

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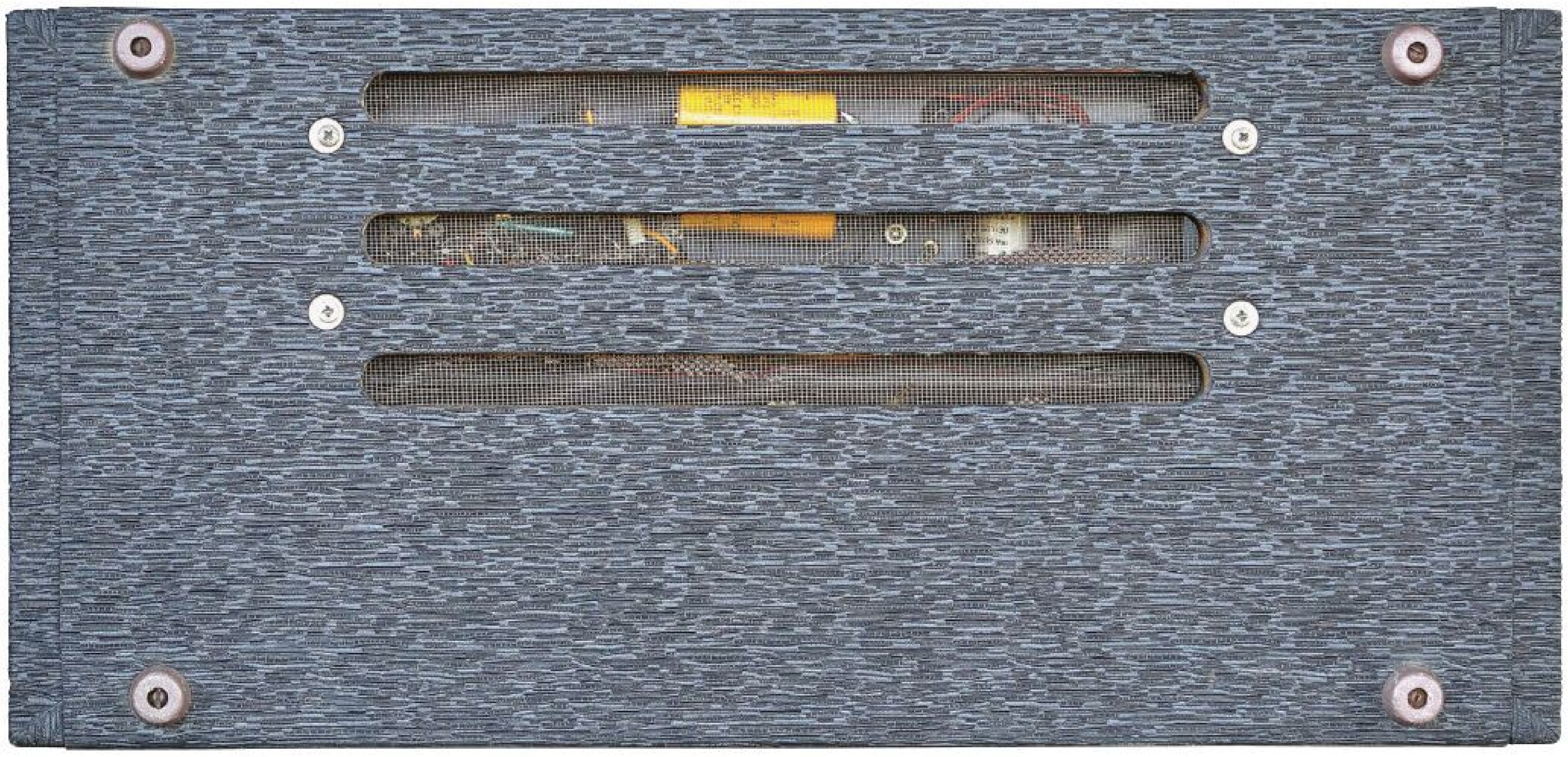


The back exhibits not only the Jensen C12P speaker, but that lower power-amp chassis and its dual Motorola germanium transformers in the push/pull output stage. The cab is bottom-vented.

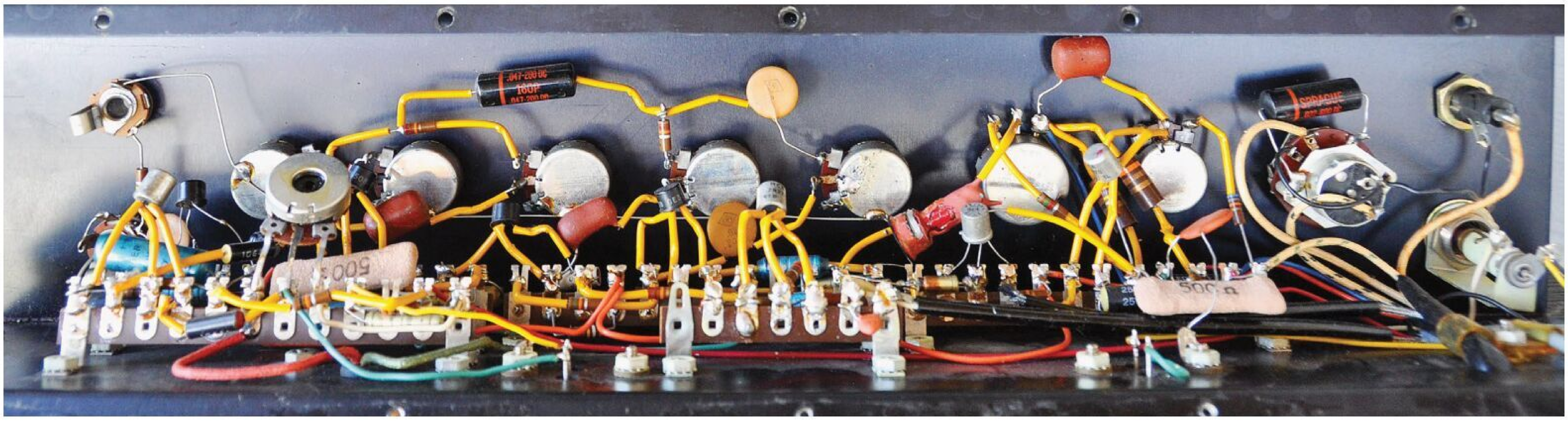
the beach or picnic, and the technology was making virtually every aspect of consumer electronics lighter, cooler, and sturdier. But, no one got away with claims of *sounding* better, especially in the guitar-amp market.

By the early '60s, Gibson was the longest-standing higher-end manufacturer that made guitars and amplifiers in-house, but it was also scrambling to compete with Fender, which had a knack for catching successive waves of musical hipness. In hindsight – a vantage point from which Gibson's post-'62 amps are funkier of style and less desirable of tone than its tube-driven combos made from 1955 to '62 – we might also assume the company was flailing in the electronics department, in general, and thus not selling many units. But in reality, those were some of the company's most successful years, sales-wise, and the amp department was booming by the middle of the decade.

So, it's ironic that the guitar/amp boom driven by the popularity of rock and roll (especially The Beatles) didn't translate to the sound the storied manufacturer was seeking from its amplifiers. If rock and roll was generating sales – and being heard in the sounds of amps made by Fender, Vox, Valco-made brands, and others – Gibson was stuck in the jazz age, tone-wise. It just so happened that the sound of transistor-powered amps suited that quite well, or at least better than it did rock and roll to the extent it made an easy conceptual leap for Gibson president Ted McCarty and engineers Walter Fuller, Dick Evans, and Seth Lover.

In 1960, Gibson attempted to future-ize the amp line's marketing image by adopting space-aged names for most of the combos, many of which were taken from satellites of the era (there's more on this in our profile of the GA-8 Discoverer, September '21). As such, once engineering developed the technology and was ready to pack it into a new amp, the similarly thrusting Starfire name made perfect sense, and the space-aged styling with Earth to the left of the control panel and Saturn to the right further drove the point home.

Delivering 40 watts from solid-state preamp and output stages, the Starfire was a single-channel amp with a control section including Loudness, Reverberation, Bass, Mid-Range, Treble, along with Depth and Frequency knobs for the tremolo. The amp is configured with the preamp circuit arrayed in the upper chassis and output and power stages in a separate chassis mounted in the bottom of the cabinet, where both power and output transformers are located. And, rather than the printed circuit board we expect of solid-state amps today, the upper chassis was put together much as were Gibson tube amps of the day, with discrete coupling capacitors and resistors often of the same type and value as those in tube amps, along with several smaller RCA and GE transistors in place of the tube gain stages. Within this part of the circuit are eight discrete transistors, which would be the same



As with most early solid-state amps, the circuit (top) is wired much as would be that of any tube amp of the day, with discrete components hand-wired along several tag strips. In addition to a full complement of controls (above), the Starfire displays the space-aged graphics that were de rigueur for many products of the day.

number of triode gain stages (traditionally two per preamp tube) required for a single-channel preamp and EQ stage, reverb, and tremolo in a standard tube amp of the era, though there are also a couple more substantial surface-mounted power transformers on the reverse side of that chassis.

The two chassis are connected via a cord with eight-pin connectors at either end. Downstairs, a pair of Motorola 2N1542 germanium PNP transistors pump out the power in a push/pull configuration feeding a standard Schumacher output transformer (though it's a little smaller than you'd likely find in a genuine 40-watt tube amp). Germanium? That's right, the stuff of fuzz-pedal legend. And, given the era of production, the preamp transistors were all germanium, as well, which were more common than the silicon transistors making inroads at the time. All this is not to say that the Starfire TR 1000 RVT produces anything like the gnarly, hairy tone generated by transistorized products of the day like the Maestro FZ-1 Fuzz Tone pedal.

"The tone is what I would describe as sterile," says owner and *VG* reader Gregg Poe. "Cranked up, it doesn't have much break-up, just louder clean sound, and not terribly loud at that. This amp would be suited for jazz or very clean playing more than anything. After playing tube amps my whole life, I would be hard-pressed to use this one live.

"The reverb is pretty decent, the vibrato actually sounds great, and the 'On' indicator jewel light pulses with the frequency setting, which is cool!" he added.

In 1962 – a year ahead of the Starfire – Gibson introduced its line of tube-driven Crestline amps, which shared many cosmetic details including the enigmatic "crest" – a coat of arms (of sorts) depicting a standing waterfowl on a red background with three inverted crescent moons, along with an armored helmet and other sorts of regal heraldry. It's often assumed both were manufactured out of house (some speculate by the Grossman Musical Instrument Company, Cleveland, which for years manufactured a line of guitars under the Crestline brand), but the Starfire and others were still resolutely Kalamazoo productions. In fact, Gibson expanded its electronics department in '62 with a 20,000 square-foot facility separate from the main factory, and by mid-decade would expand even further to meet demand.

Many customers shared Gibson's faith in transistors as the way of the future, and Starfire production was significant into 1965. By '66, the new GSS solid-state line had taken over, itself tailing off through the next few years as guitarists grew wise to its sonic failings; Vox, Fender, and others would also introduce solid-state lines that would go the way of the dodo.

Having boomed in the decade, Gibson amp production slowed, then ended altogether in Kalamazoo after '68. **VG**

Classics

John and Kathy Francis gave the restored 125 to Panozzo (middle) in 2018. "Like many Styx fans, we consider ourselves archivists of the band's history," John said. "It goes beyond collecting guitar picks, tour shirts, and posters. All of that is great and has brought us years of joy, but the Gibson is part of the band's legacy."

For nearly five decades, Chuck Panozzo has been the bassist in Styx, enjoying the ride as it went from playing garage parties in suburban Chicago through its heyday as AOR-radio superstars who charted eight songs in *Billboard*'s Top 10 and eight more in the Top 40.

Panozzo started on guitar as a kid; seeing that Chuck and his twin, John, were deeply interested in playing music, their parents bought instruments for the boys – Chuck a new Gibson, John a drum kit.

"I was nine or 10 years old when we went to Bartoli Music School, in Roseland," he said. "I was handed an ES-125TC and played one song. I was sold!"

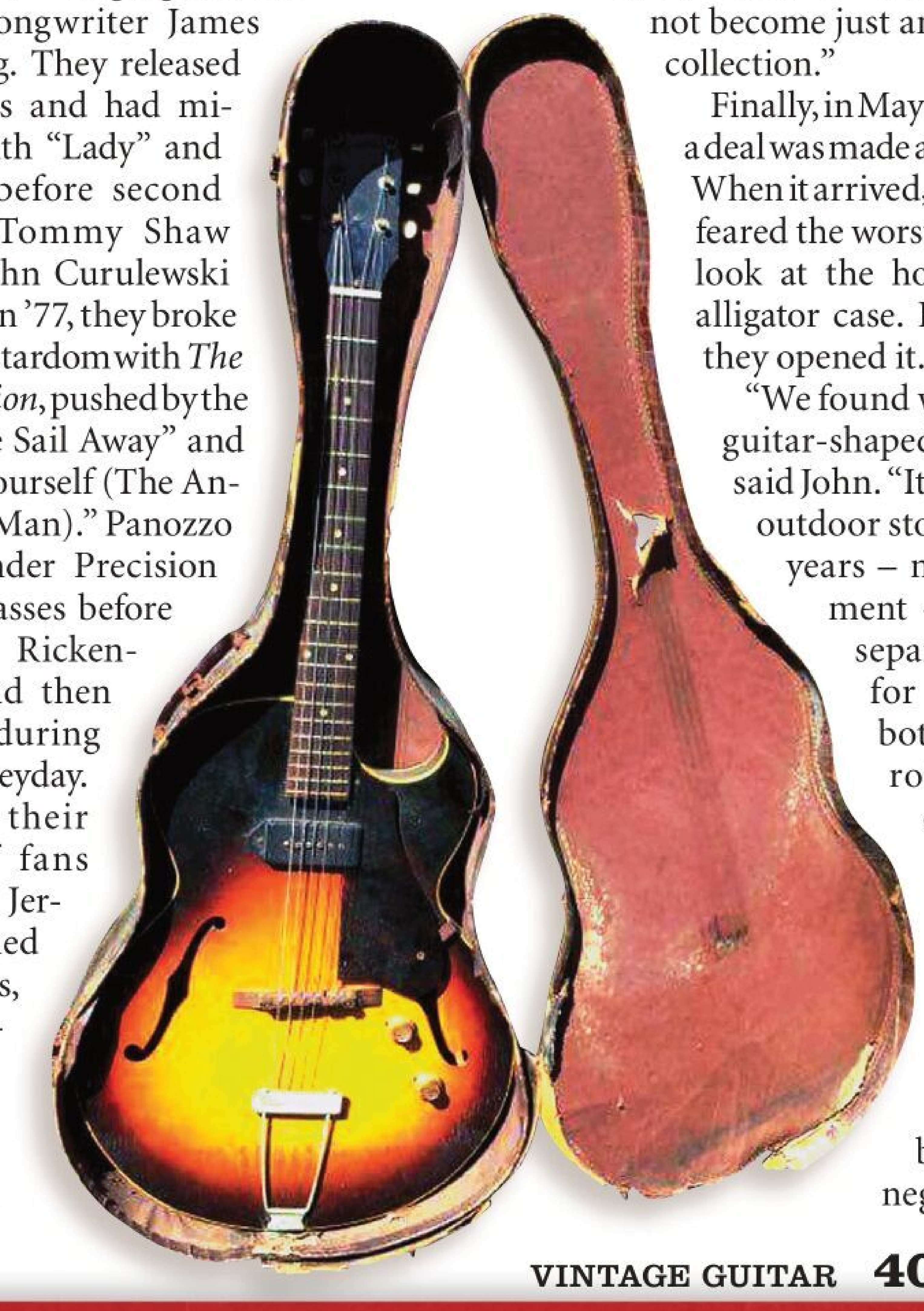
In 1961, the 12-year-olds began jamming with their 14-year-old neighbor, Dennis DeYoung (on accordion), then soon formed a band – The Tradewinds. After high school, Panozzo went to seminary in '63, but realized it wasn't his calling and returned home the following year. While he'd been away, The Tradewinds carried on with another guitarist. Wanting to play again, Panozzo offered to grab a bass, which meant putting the 125 under his bed and getting a Höfner 500/1 "violin" model.

DeYoung moved from accordion to a piano and The Tradewinds eventually became Styx in '72, after bringing aboard guitarist/songwriter James "JY" Young. They released five albums and had minor hits with "Lady" and "Lorelei" before second guitarist Tommy Shaw replaced John Curulewski in late '75. In '77, they broke through to stardom with *The Grand Illusion*, pushed by the hits "Come Sail Away" and "Fooling Yourself (The Angry Young Man)." Panozzo played Fender Precision and Jazz basses before moving to Rickenbackers and then Alembics during the band's heyday.

Among their throng of fans was a New Jerseyan named John Francis, whose devotion never wavered and evolved to include pursuing memorabilia. As a hobby guitarist and guitar nut, he was always aware of the gear used by Panozzo, Young, and Shaw, and in 2012 he saw something that especially piqued his interest.

"I read a post on the internet saying someone was selling 'Chuck's first Gibson guitar' and other items," he said. "I reached out to let the guy know I was interested, but right away he seemed to cool on the idea of selling the stuff."

Undeterred, every six months for the next four years, John and his wife, Kathy, an equally devout Styx fan, would send another e-mail with an offer. "Usually his response was 'Thanks, but I'm not interested in selling right now,'" John said. "But, Kathy and I vowed that if at all possible, we'd make sure the instrument would be rescued and not become just another guitar in some collection."



The guitar prior to restoration.

Finally, in May of '16, things changed; a deal was made and the guitar shipped. When it arrived, though, the Francises feared the worst after getting a better look at the hole in the chipboard alligator case. Holding their breath, they opened it...

"We found what was essentially a guitar-shaped piece of fire wood," said John. "It had been stored in an outdoor storage locker for many years – not an ideal environment – and the back was separated from the body for several inches, the bottom of the case was rotted, and the back of the guitar looked water-damaged. But the worst part was the neck was separated."

While disappointed they hadn't asked for more (and better) photos before negotiating a price, they were no less determined to resurrect the guitar, and sent it to a luthier in upstate New York.

"We decided not to go full restoration in terms of cosmetics because we wanted the guitar to exhibit the hard life it endured," John said.

By the summer of 2018, it was ready.

"It played beautifully and the original P-90 still sounded great!" John added. "The tuners, tailpiece, pickguard, strap button, control knobs, pots, and output jack were still original, but the neck had been re-set, of course, the fretboard leveled, all frets replaced, and it had a new nut and bridge."

Following a Styx show in Pennsylvania that August, the Francises presented the long-lost guitar to Panozzo.

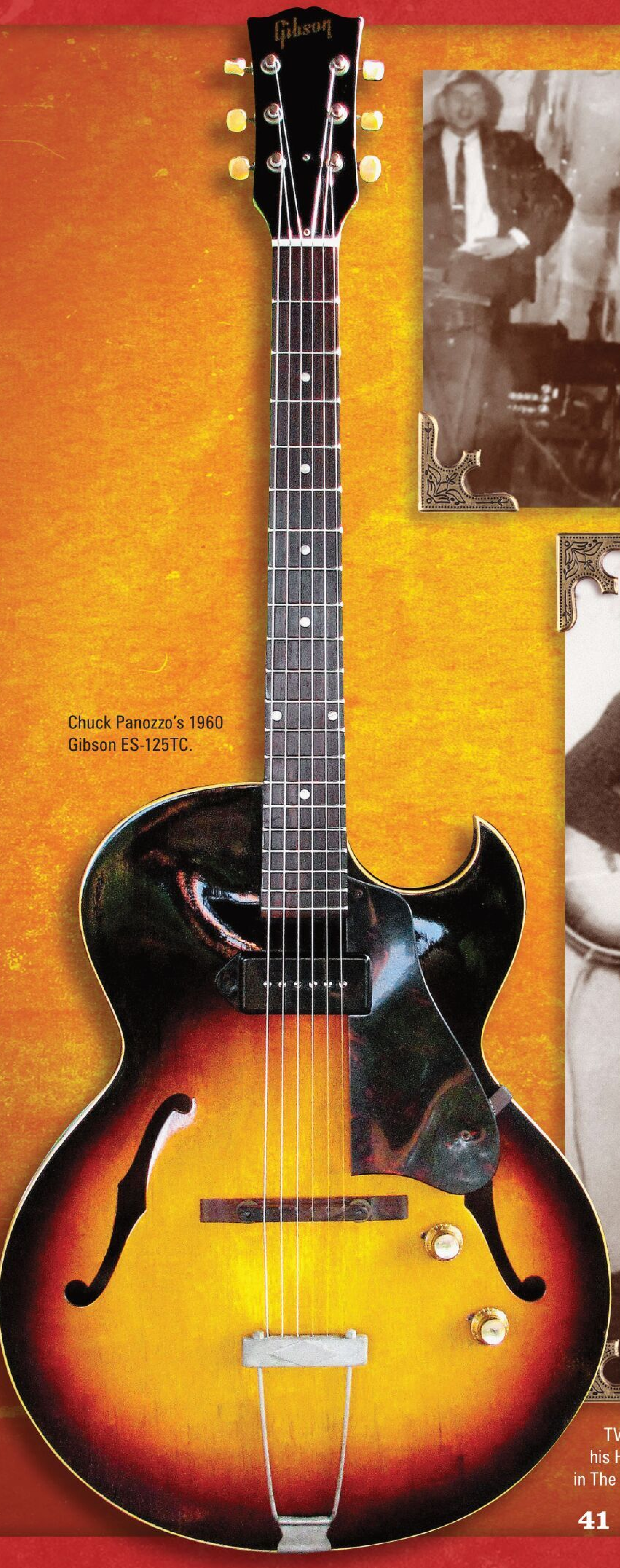
"It was really moving to see Chuck hold it," said Kathy.

Panozzo couldn't recall the last time he'd seen it, and he graciously offered to buy it back even though the cost of acquiring it and the repairs far exceeded its market value.

"We were so glad we could make this reunion possible," John said. "We get such a thrill knowing that in Chuck's hands, the 125 helped give life to the music of Styx, which has become an enormous part of rock-and-roll history." – ***Ward Meeker***

Do you have a classic/collectible/vintage guitar with an interesting personal story that might be a good fit for "Classics?" If so, send an e-mail to ward@vintageguitar.com for details on how it could be featured.

Photo courtesy of Chuck Panozzo.



Chuck Panozzo's 1960 Gibson ES-125TC.

TW4 in 1964 (top), with Dennis DeYoung (left), John Panozzo, Chuck Panozzo (with his Höfner 500/1), and Tom Nardin. The only known photo of Panozzo with the 125 in The Tradewinds, playing a New Year's Eve party in 1962.

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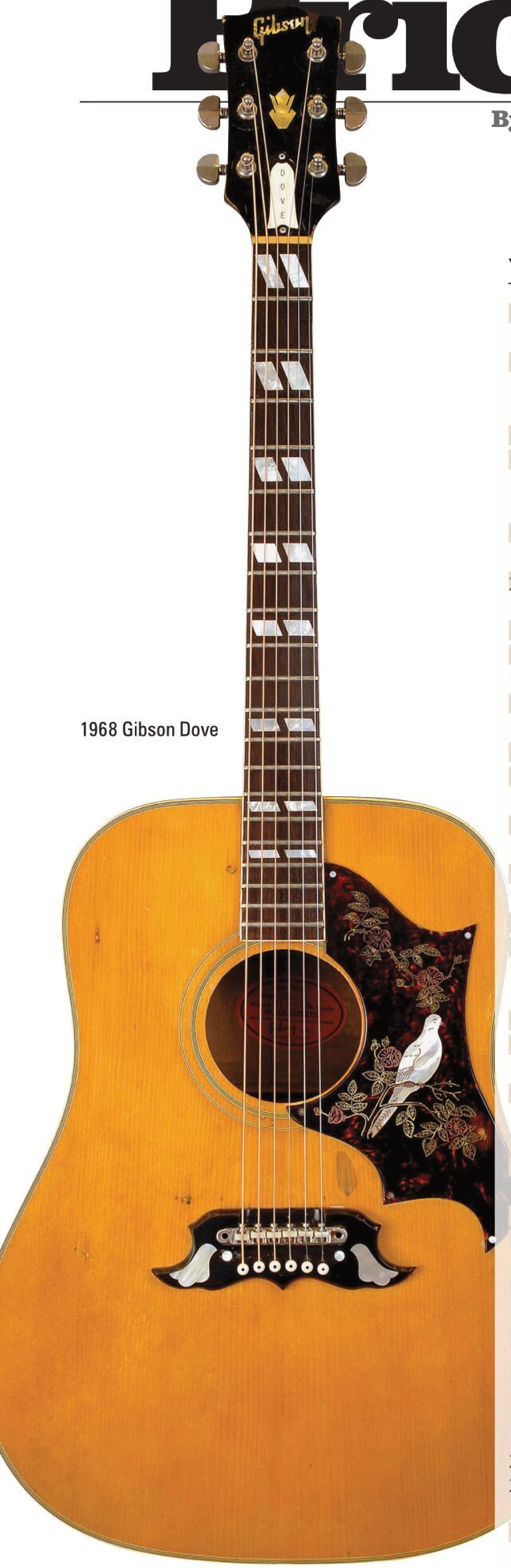
Price Guide

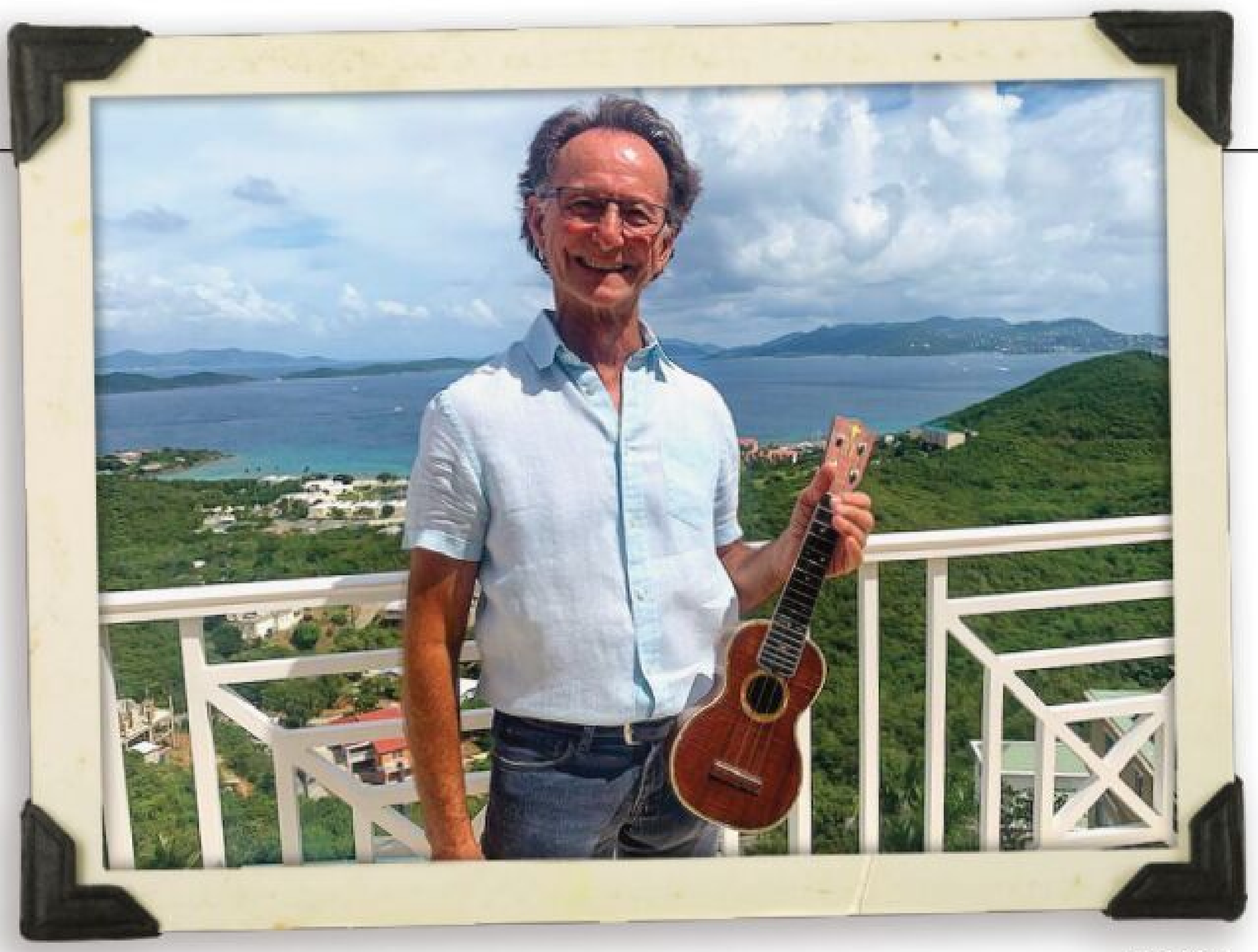
By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree



1968 Gibson Dove

NEW & UPDATED LISTINGS

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
1965	Airline Lap Steel	Res-O-Glas	$465	$600
1995	Applause Mandolin	Various	$100	$200
1995	Arbor Acoustic guitar (various)		$75	$150
1922	Bacon & Day Blue Ribbon Special Tenor Banjo		$1,500	$2,000
1896	Bauer (George) Acme Professional Bowl Mandolin	Plain style	$100	$300
1895	Benary and Sons Celebrated Benary 5-String Banjo	Open back	$400	$550
1956	Bigsby Standard (solidbody Spanish)	Various specs	$65,000	$250,000
1997	Bourgeois A-500	Natural	$3,800	$5,000
2011	Bourgeois D-150	Brazilian, Adirondack	$4,500	$5,800
1975	Bozo Acoustic 6 & 12 strings (USA)	Appointments vary	$1,500	$8,500
1948	Bronson Leilani Lap Steel and Amp Set		$385	$500
1990	Charvel 375 Deluxe		$575	$750
1947	D'Angelico Excel/Excel (Cutaway)	Natural, orig binding	$31,000	$40,000
1948	D'Angelico Excel/Excel (Cutaway)	Sunburst, orig binding	$28,000	$36,000
1961	D'Angelico New Yorker Deluxe (Cutaway)	Natural	$38,000	$50,000
1990	D'Aquisto Avante Garde	Blond	$70,000	$90,000
1983	D'Aquisto Excel (Cutaway)	Blond	$33,000	$43,000
1921	Ditson Style 1 Standard		$2,725	$3,625
1936	Dobro Model 19/Regal 19		$1,150	$1,500
1933	Dobro Model 25	Square neck	$1,500	$1,950
1878	Dobson, Henry C Silver Chime 5-String Banjo	Plain style	$700	$1,100
1878	Dobson, Henry C Silver Chime 5-String Banjo	Fancy style	$1,100	$1,700
1965	English Electronics Tonemaster Lap Steel	Stringtone pitch changer	$525	$675
1992	Fender '60 Stratocaster	Custom Shop	$2,200	$2,850
1971	Fender 800 Pedal Steel		$850	$1,125
1962	Fender Jazz Bass	Curved, Sunburst, 3-knob	$12,000	$15,500
1966	Fender Jazzmaster	Sunburst	$4,300	$5,600
1977	Fender Precision Bass	Natural	$2,300	$3,000
1954	Fender Stratocaster	Early-mid '54 typical features, sunburst	$81,000	$105,000
1960	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst	$24,500	$32,000
1961	Fender Super Amp	Brown, oxblood grille	$2,100	$2,750
1954	Fender Telecaster	Blond, white 'guard	$24,000	$31,000
1970	Fender Telecaster	White, poly	$7,600	$9,900
1989	Flatiron A-5 Artist Mandolin	Gibson Montana	$2,200	$2,900
1986	Flatiron Model 2 Mandolin	Pre-Gibson	$700	$900
1998	Gibson '58 Les Paul Figured Top		$3,400	$4,400
1998	Gibson '60 Les Paul Special	Single & Double Cut	$2,000	$2,600
2011	Gibson Advanced Jumbo Pro		$1,300	$1,675
2002	Gibson Advanced Jumbo Reissue		$1,800	$2,325
1948	Gibson BR-9 Lap Steel		$450	$575
1968	Gibson Dove	Natural	$2,600	$3,400



Dewey Bowen with a 1930s Martin Style 5-K uke.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
2013	Gibson Elliot Easton Tikibird Firebird		$1,450	$1,900
1965	Gibson FJN Folk Singer	12-fret wide-neck	$1,600	$2,100
1959	Gibson Flying V		$275,000	$357,000
1990	Gibson Flying V Reissue	Various colors	$1,000	$1,300
1948	Gibson J-200	Sunburst	$12,000	$16,000
1970	Gibson J-200	Natural or sunburst	$3,000	$3,900
2000	Gibson J-200	Natural or sunburst	$2,800	$3,600
1951	Gibson J-45	Tapered hdsk, small guard, belly bridge	$5,400	$7,000
1962	Gibson Johnny Smith	1 or 2 pickups	$9,800	$12,700
1978	Gibson Les Paul 25/50 Anniv.		$3,400	$4,400
1957	Gibson Les Paul Model	PAF pickups, white plastic, goldtop	$110,000	$143,000
1958	Gibson Les Paul Standard (Sunburst)	Highly figured	$279,000	$362,000
1960	Gibson Les Paul Standard (Sunburst)	Plain top (late flat neck)	$142,000	$185,000
1900	Gibson Orville Gibson	Very rare historical	$30,000	$77,000
1963	Gretsch Princess (6106)		$1,600	$2,100
1956	Gretsch White Penguin (6134)	Single-cut, standard case	$88,000	$115,000
1961	Guild Artist Award		$5,500	$7,200
1968	Guild Bluesbird M-75 (Hollowbody)		$2,325	$3,025
1967	Hagstrom Model I B/F-100B Bass		$575	$750
1900	Howe-Orme Mandolin Style 6	Brazilian, top of the line	$3,000	$4,000
2011	Ibanez FR1620/Prestige FR1620	Neo-classic	$525	$700
1988	Ibanez George Benson GB10	Sunburst	$1,750	$2,250
1998	Ibanez Joe Satriani JS 10th Anniv.		$2,150	$2,800
1976	Ibanez Model 2351 Les	Les Paul goldtop copy-era	$575	$760
2003	Jackson Kelly USA KE2		$1,150	$1,500
2002	Jerry Jones Baritone 6-string Electric		$1,300	$1,700
1967	Kimberly Longhorn	S-style, 2 pickups, deep cutaways	$300	$450
1977	Kramer 350-G Standard		$975	$1,275
1977	Kramer 650-G Artist		$1,250	$1,625
1990	Kramer Baretta	Standard opaque	$625	$800
1988	Kramer Ferrington		$300	$400
2008	Larrivee 000-50	Mahogany back & sides	$1,400	$1,800
1999	Larrivee D-09	Indian or walnut	$1,200	$1,600
2005	Larrivee L-30 (classical)		$1,100	$1,450
1915	Lyon & Healy Style A Mandocello		$4,900	$6,400
1966	Marshall Model 1959 Super Lead Amp	Black, plexi	$3,700	$4,900

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

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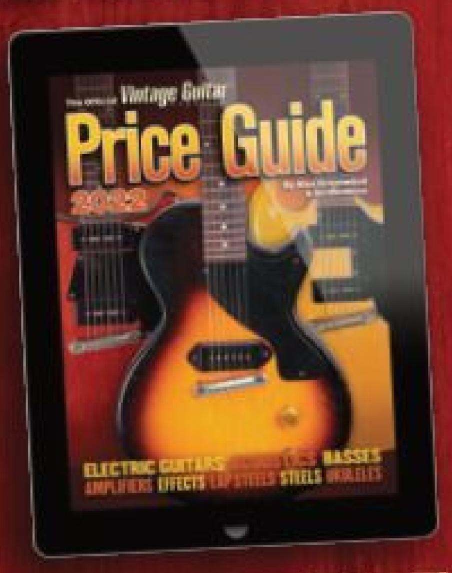

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
1934	Martelle De Luxe	Mahogany, made by Gibson	$6,300	$8,400
1966	Martin 0 -16NY	251 made	$2,150	$2,800
1970	Martin 000-18	353 made	$2,100	$2,700
2005	Martin 000C Steve Miller Pegasus		$2,350	$3,050
2000	Martin 00-17SO Sing Out	50 made	$1,350	$1,750
1961	Martin 00-18 E	1 pickup	$4,700	$6,100
2006	Martin 00-18 H Geoff Muldaur		$2,475	$3,200
1899	Martin 00-21		$5,500	$7,300
1939	Martin 00-28	1 made	$21,000	$27,000
1921	Martin 00-30		$11,500	$15,000
1935	Martin 0-15	2 made	$2,725	$3,550
1960	Martin 0-15T	175 made	$950	$1,250
1926	Martin 0-21	Gut, 12-fret	$5,500	$7,300
2009	Martin DCPA1		$1,725	$2,250
2021	Martin GPC11E	Mexico Road Series	$600	$775
1967	Martin GT-75	Double cut	$2,150	$2,800
1969	Microfrets Golden Comet		$1,200	$1,600
1973	Morris 000 Copy	Brazilian laminate, import	$450	$600
1935	National Don Style 2		$7,400	$9,600
1956	National Model 1103 Del-Mar		$1,150	$1,500
1953	National Model 1111 Aristocrat	Natural	$1,050	$1,350
1954	National Model 1150 (F.T. Auditorium)		$650	$850
1940	National New Yorker Spanish	15.5" body	$1,500	$2,000
1935	Oahu Style 50K Student Guitar		$100	$200
1990	Orville by Gibson Les Paul Jr. dlb.cut. (copy model)		$550	$725
1935	Paramount Style C	Archtop	$425	$550
1998	Parker Fly Artist		$1,675	$2,175
2007	Parker Mojo	Singlecut	$1,000	$1,300
1961	Premier Custom Solidbody	3 pickup	$650	$850
1971	Rickenbacker Electro EH-3 Lap Steel	6-string	$385	$500
1964	Rickenbacker Electro ES-16	1 pickup, red, 3/4 student	$825	$1,075
1995	Rickenbacker Model 220 Hamburg	Solidbody	$850	$1,100
1974	Rickenbacker Model 320		$2,500	$3,200
1991	Rickenbacker Model 325JL/John Lennon		$2,300	$3,000
2016	Rickenbacker Model 330		$1,425	$1,850
2011	Santa Cruz 000 12-fret	Brazilian	$4,600	$6,000
2000	Santa Cruz D-HR (Richard Hover)	Indian RW	$2,450	$3,200
2005	Santa Cruz H Brazilian	Brazilian	$4,600	$6,000
1972	Sho-Bud Pro III	Round front	$2,100	$2,700
1951	Stromberg G-1	1 brace	$15,000	$20,000
1953	Stromberg Master 400 Cutaway	1 brace, Natural	$45,000	$65,000
1964	Supro Jet Airliner Steel	With optional legs	$600	$800
2011	Taylor 214ce		$500	$650
2019	Taylor 312ce V-Class		$1,100	$1,425
2019	Taylor 362ce V-Class		$1,200	$1,600
1967	Tiesco Electric	2 pickups	$270	$350
1982	Tokai EX-55	2 pickups	$575	$750
1955	Tosca Bolero 1123		$675	$875
2000	Triggs Acoustic/Elec Archtop	Excel 17"	$2,700	$3,600
1951	Vega Profundo Flat Top	Rosewood	$1,900	$2,500
1925	Weissenborn Style #3 Hawaiian		$3,800	$5,000
1920	Weymann Larger Model (most with Brazilian)	Various specs	$3,000	$6,000

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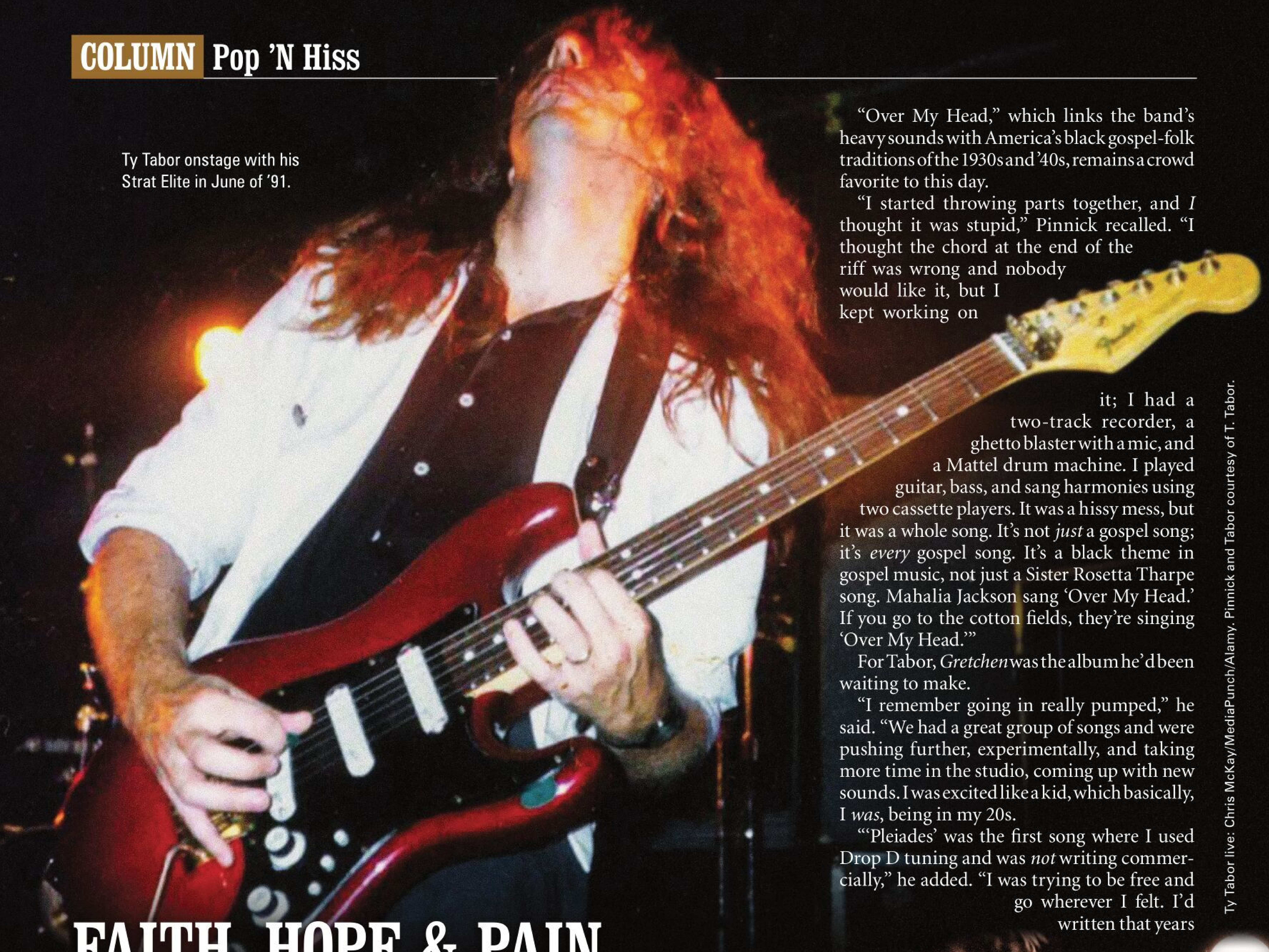


Ty Tabor onstage with his Strat Elite in June of '91.

FAITH, HOPE & PAIN

King's X's *Gretchen Goes To Nebraska*

By Oscar Jordan

By the final year of the '80s, King's X was a powerhouse of curiosity cleaving its way through the harmonic torso of a changing rock scene propelled by drummer Jerry Gaskill's backbeat prog, Dug Pinnick's blunt-force bass lines and come-to-Jesus recitations, and guitarist Ty Tabor's inspired Drop D experiments.

As the follow-up to 1988's *Out Of The Silent Planet*, the band's second album, *Gretchen Goes to Nebraska*, had to go deep. Co-produced by manager Sam Taylor, it saw the band double down on its Beatles-esque, gospel-tinged metal sound in the wake of mainstream-rock monsters like Guns 'N Roses' *Appetite For Destruction* and Living Colour's *Vivid*. It also came as the band's future hinged on a hit.

"It was a little overwhelming and exciting at the same time," recalled Pinnick. "Sam said, 'You *can't* have a sophomore slump – that's the kiss of death. It's gotta be better than the first one.' So I lost myself in it; I wrote the songs while going through personal issues and singing about them. Half the record was old songs, the other half new. I had songs from 10 years before that I'd never shown the guys. That's how we found 'Over My Head' and 'Fall On Me.'"

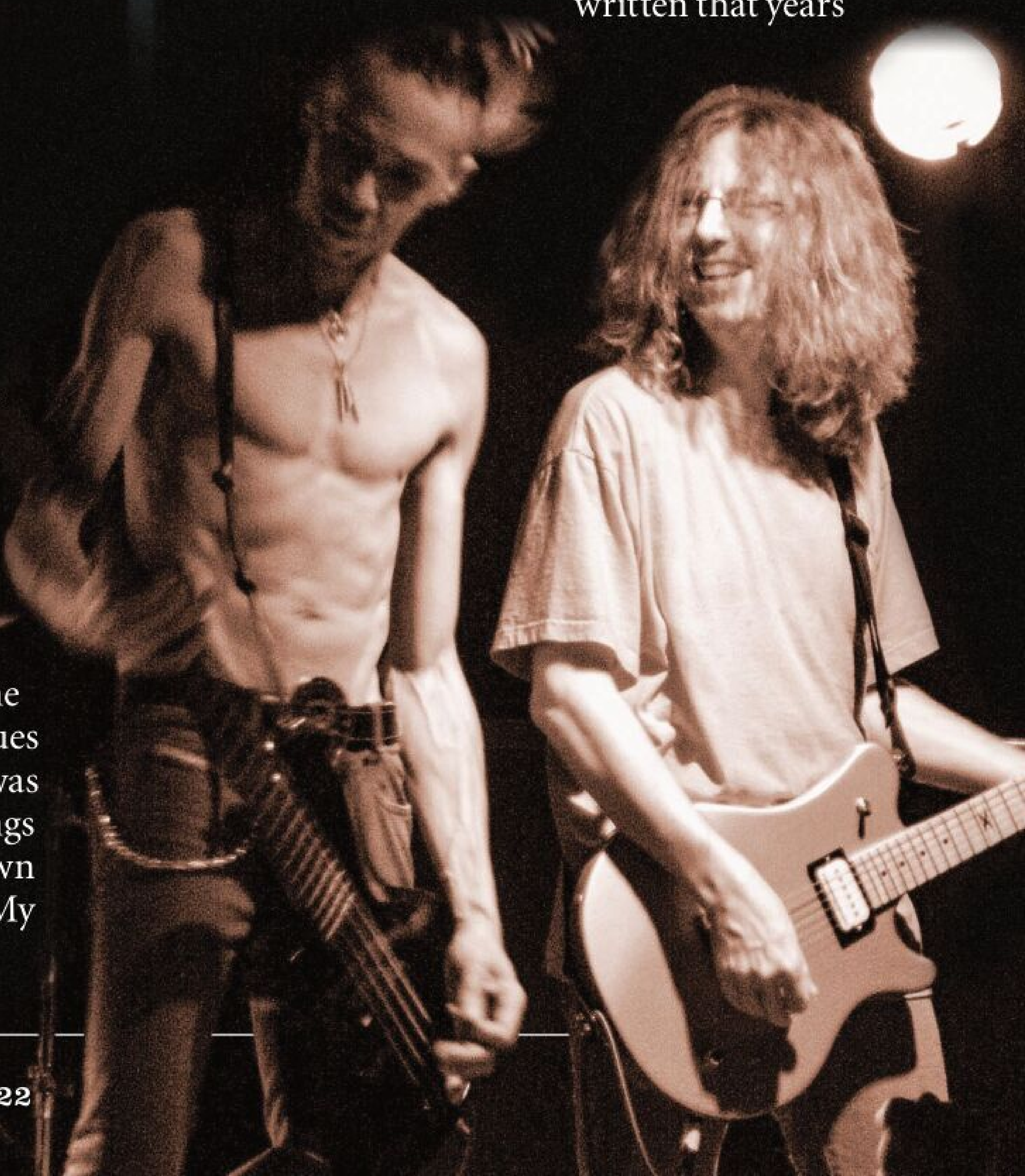
"Over My Head," which links the band's heavy sounds with America's black gospel-folk traditions of the 1930s and '40s, remains a crowd favorite to this day.

"I started throwing parts together, and *I* thought it was stupid," Pinnick recalled. "I thought the chord at the end of the riff was wrong and nobody would like it, but I kept working on it; I had a two-track recorder, a ghetto blaster with a mic, and a Mattel drum machine. I played guitar, bass, and sang harmonies using two cassette players. It was a hissy mess, but it was a whole song. It's not *just* a gospel song; it's *every* gospel song. It's a black theme in gospel music, not just a Sister Rosetta Tharpe song. Mahalia Jackson sang 'Over My Head.' If you go to the cotton fields, they're singing 'Over My Head.'"

For Tabor, *Gretchen* was the album he'd been waiting to make.

"I remember going in really pumped," he said. "We had a great group of songs and were pushing further, experimentally, and taking more time in the studio, coming up with new sounds. I was excited like a kid, which basically, I *was*, being in my 20s.

"'Pleiades' was the first song where I used Drop D tuning and was *not* writing commercially," he added. "I was trying to be free and go wherever I felt. I'd written that years



Ty Tabor live: Chris McKay/MediaPunch/Alamy, Pinnick and Tabor courtesy of T. Tabor.

before our first album, but it didn't end up there because the recording wasn't good and we had enough songs, so we left it off. For *Gretchen*, we tried again, and the recording had energy, magic, and felt live. The band loved it. Dug started using Drop D and was also inspired to write non-formulaic music."

A Les Paul player early on, Tabor shifted his gear in a way that spoke to his desire for a distinctive sound.

"Three years before the first album, I'd found a Fender Elite Strat from the early '80s, which is different than the modern Elite Strat," he remembered. "It was super heavy and had gold hardware. It had active single-coils and the preamp could dial-in mids and boost them so it sounded powerful, with a massive tone. So, I tried it on the heavy stuff where I'd been using humbuckers, dialed in for my Lab Series L5, which is a weird amp; I disconnected the power section and used it as a preamp, running it to a large Sunn power amp normally used to power PAs. I ran old Marshall cabs with Celestion Vintage 30s, and it was monstrous. I used the same amp, same cabs, and same mics on the first four albums."

Arguably the finest work by King's X, the title *Gretchen Goes to Nebraska* was conceived years before its release, when the band's live-sound engineer, Kevin Mourning, jokingly blurted the worst title he could imagine.

Gretchen continues to imbue the band's live performances as its psychedelic sitars, fierce guitar tones, and spiritual themes compel listeners to consider their relationship to humanity.

"As for the lyrics, I'm a truthteller," Pinnick said. "I like to spew things and be uncomfortable after I've said it. *Gretchen* is not a concept album, but it sounds like it is. It's actually the opposite of a concept album; when King's X does a record, we don't know what it's going to be like until we put it together. We listen and say, 'People will think this is a concept album.' Then we laugh."

Gretchen peaked at #123 on *Billboard*. It didn't push the band over the top like *Appetite* and *Vivid* did for Guns and Living Colour, but it occupies a special place in the hearts and minds of fans the world over.

"I feel so proud it's gotten so much love from so many amazing, respected musicians, fans, and friends all over the world," Tabor said. "It's mind-boggling I was ever a part of anything that had that influence."

Like most great art, though, inspired creation came at a price for some.

"It was one of the hardest records to make," said Pinnick. "I was dealing with a lot of issues and our manager drove a lot of stuff out of me that I didn't feel good about. I have a hard time listening to *Gretchen* because I remember the struggle. It wasn't fun at all. Sam dragged out of me what he needed to make that record, and nobody will ever do that to me again." **VG**

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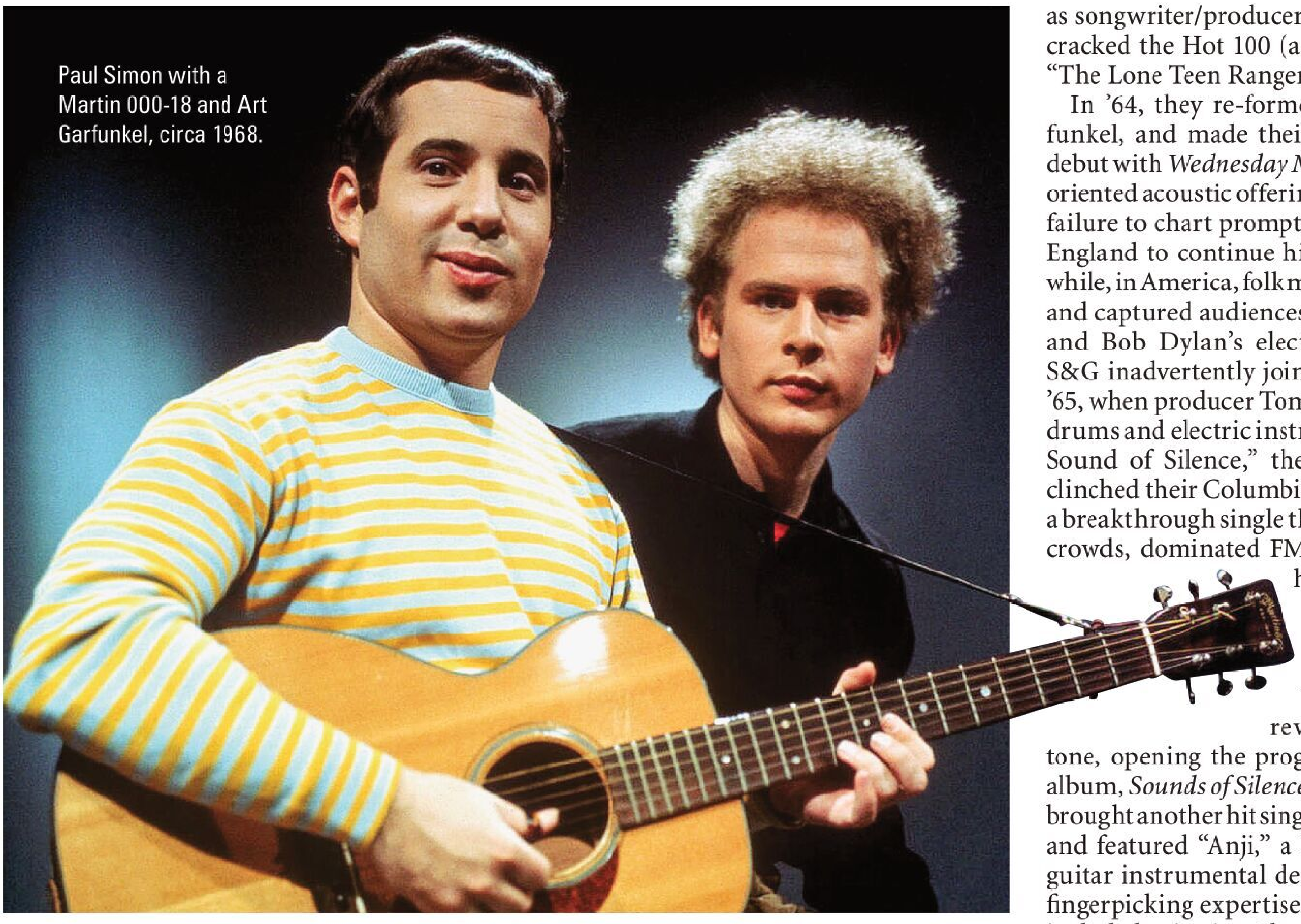

Paul Simon with a Martin 000-18 and Art Garfunkel, circa 1968.

Simon and Garfunkel: Pictorial Press/Alamy.

PAUL SIMON

Postmodern Troubadour: The Simon & Garfunkel Years

By Wolf Marshall

Troubadours – poet/musicians active in Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries, played a defining role in Western civilization. The original singer/songwriters, their trade was telling stories of popular culture and courtly romance, some intellectual and heady, others humorous and bawdy, accompanied by simple monophonic music. The dictionary further defines troubadour as "a wandering minstrel," a descriptor that certainly fits Paul Simon.

Paul Frederic Simon was born October 13, 1941. His father, Louis, was a professor/bassist/bandleader, and mother, Belle, a schoolteacher. The family lived in Queens and was typical of new Americans who prized music and baseball in their quest for assimilation. Paul developed a passion for folk, jazz, and blues – particularly Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly – and as a young man acquired enviable fingerstyle guitar technique. At 11, he started singing with schoolmate Art Garfunkel, who was especially fond of Everly Brothers' music. Simon was 12 when he wrote his first song, "The Girl for Me." By '57, they were performing as Tom & Jerry, and recorded "Hey Schoolgirl," which reached #49 on the pop charts. They toured, appeared on "The Dick Clark Show," and during the folk boom maintained a presence in Greenwich Village coffeehouses like the Gaslight, Bitter End, and Folk City.

Simon wrote more than 30 songs in this period, moonlighted with Tico and the Triumphs, adopted the pseudonyms Paul Kane, True Taylor, and Jerry Landis, worked as songwriter/producer for other labels, and cracked the Hot 100 (as Landis) in '62 with "The Lone Teen Ranger."

In '64, they re-formed as Simon & Garfunkel, and made their Columbia Records debut with *Wednesday Morning, 3 AM*, a folk-oriented acoustic offering that sold poorly. Its failure to chart prompted Simon to move to England to continue his solo career. Meanwhile, in America, folk morphed into folk rock and captured audiences thanks to the Byrds and Bob Dylan's electric transformation. S&G inadvertently joined the movement in '65, when producer Tom Wilson overdubbed drums and electric instrumentation on "The Sound of Silence," the audition song that clinched their Columbia deal. The result was a breakthrough single that captivated college crowds, dominated FM radio, became a #1 hit that December, and competed for supremacy with the Beatles' "We Can Work It Out." The reworked track set a tone, opening the program of their second album, *Sounds of Silence* (January '66), which brought another hit single with "I Am a Rock" and featured "Anji," a Davey Graham folk-guitar instrumental demonstrating Simon's fingerpicking expertise. Studio contributors included guitarists Glen Campbell, Joe South, and Fred Carter, Jr., as well as drummer Hal Blaine, keyboardist Larry Knechtel, and bassist Joe Osborn of the Wrecking Crew.

The duo's first masterpiece, *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme* (October '66), balanced exuberance, intelligence, and creativity while continuing the upward trajectory with "Homeward Bound," "The Dangling Conversation," "Scarborough Fair," and "Feelin' Groovy."

Simon exerted greater artistic control while recording the more-diverse program, which incorporated harpsichord, organ, piano, double bass, harmonica, and spoken word; the efforts of Blaine and South were augmented by bassist Carol Kaye, jazz drummer Joe Morello ("Take Five") and other studio denizens. "A Hazy Shade of Winter," penned in London in '65 and recorded during the sessions, was issued as a single.

April of '68 saw *Bookends*, a concept album dealing with life's journey from childhood to old age that placed them in the ranks of the Beatles, Stones, and Dylan – and at the forefront of the counterculture following an appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival. *Bookends* was sophisticated, experimental, and textured, while Simon's story lines, in-

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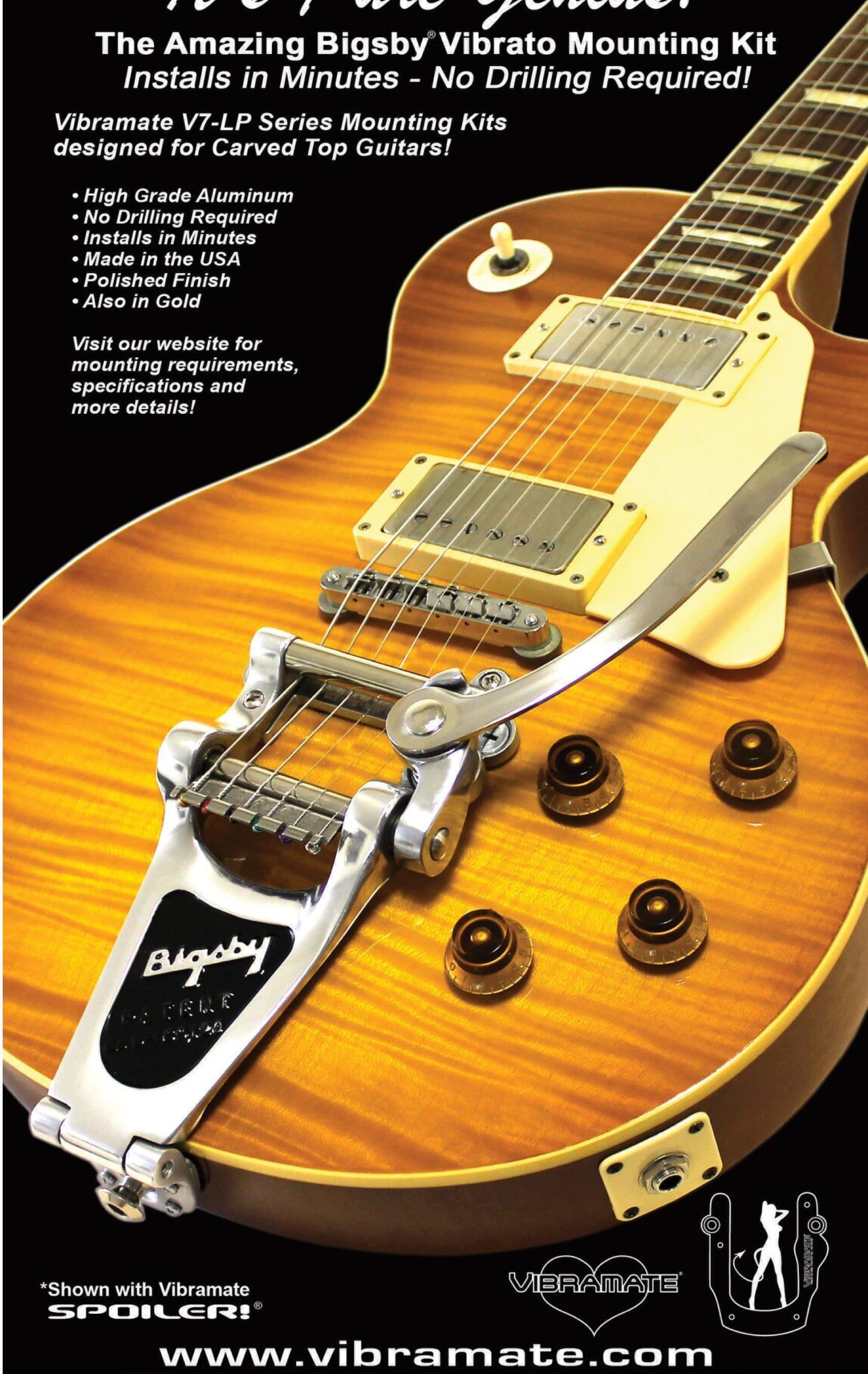

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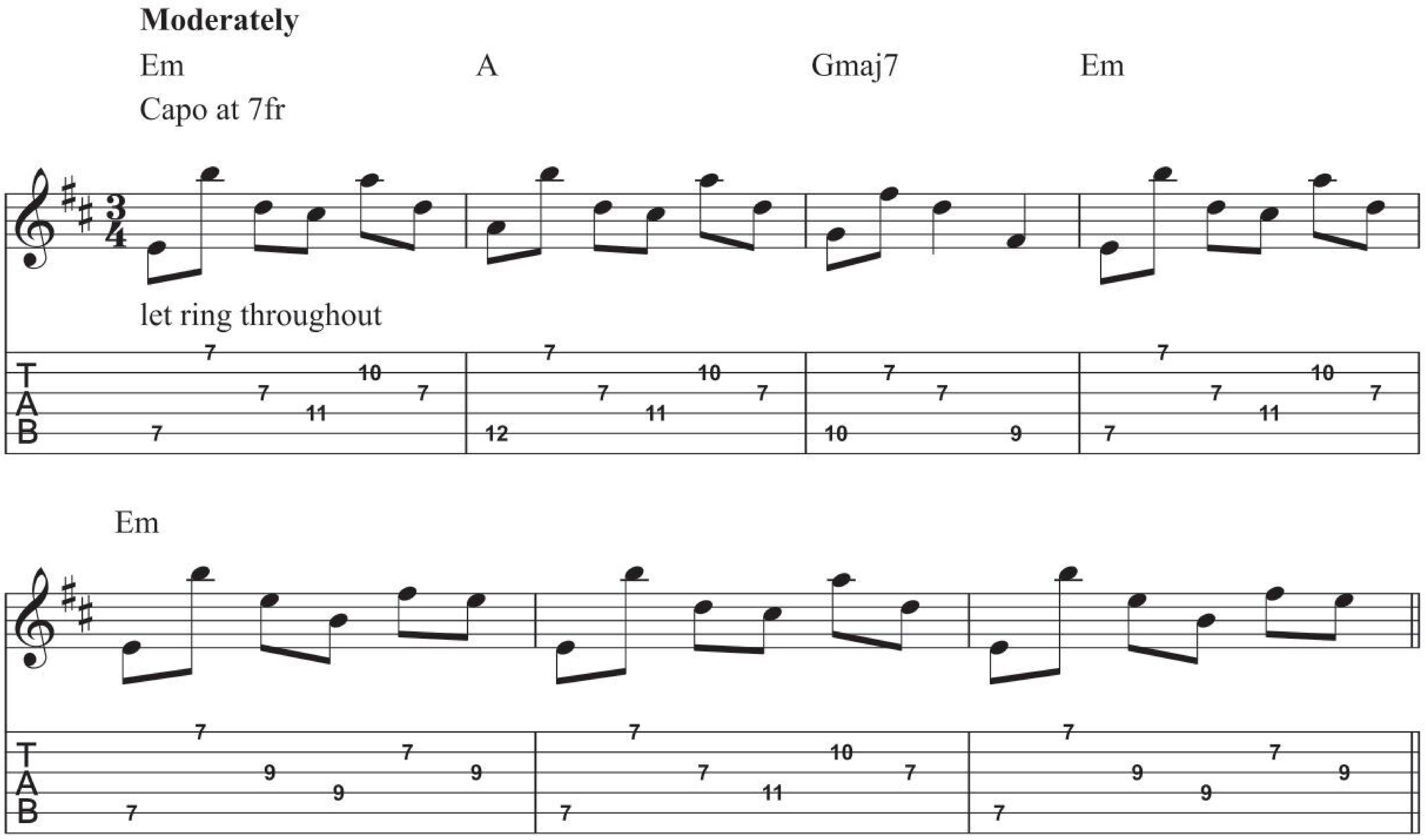
spired by *Sgt. Pepper*, probed themes of youth, alienation, relationships, love, and mortality. Distinguished by "A Hazy Shade of Winter," "At the Zoo," "Fakin' It," "America" and "Mrs. Robinson," *Bookends* established S&G not only as producers, but as the world's leading duo. Innovations included Moog synthesizer on "Save the Life of My Child," strings, horn, xylophone, and Jimmie Haskell's orchestration in "Old Friends," Leslie-processed guitar on "America," and jazz allusions in "Overs" and "Punky's Dilemma." Studio contributors included John Simon (no relation) on Moog and the indefatigable Golden Trio of Blaine, Knechtel, and Osborn.

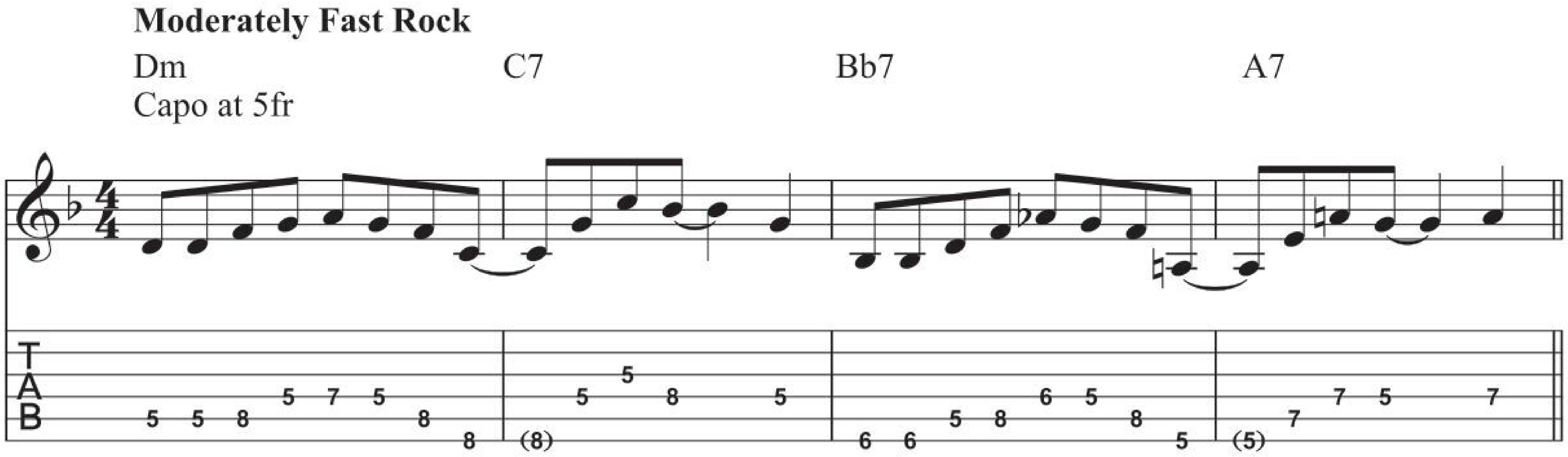
S&G's final studio album was *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, released in January of 1970. More ambitious and assured, it stretched into gospel, R&B, progressive rock, and world music. They became the first musicians to use 16-track recording by synchronizing two 8-track machines, and noteworthy moments abound. The title track, inspired by J.S. Bach's "O Sacred Heart" and reminiscent of the Beatles' "Let It Be," was rendered on piano to create a gospel mood, then enlarged with strings, vibraphone, and two bass parts. "El Condor Pasa (If I Could)" explored South American sounds with native folk instruments. "Baby Driver" married Beach Boys rock-and-roll to R&B, "Why Don't You Write Me" boasted early reggae references, and "So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright" exploited Latin jazz/bossa-nova rhythms. "The Boxer" was recorded in Los Angeles, Nashville, and St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia University, and featured an intriguing layered interplay in the intro between Simon's drop-tuned guitar and Fred Carter's alt-tuned high-voice guitar. Venerable cohorts reappeared on the album – Blaine, Knechtel, Osborn, Carter, and Haskell contributed, as did Las Incas (on Peruvian instruments), Nashville session star Pete Drake (Dobro, pedal steel), Bob Moore (tuba), Gary Coleman (percussion), Charlie McCoy (harmonica) and a shouting R&B all-star horn section in "Keep the Customer Satisfied."

To this day, debates rage over the status of *Bookends* versus *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, but any assertions are tantamount to hair splitting or applying similar standards to *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*.

"Bye Bye Love" was recorded in November of '69, and proved prophetic as S&G parted ways in '70. Simon again pursued a solo career, releasing "Mother and Child Reunion," "Kodachrome," "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," "Slip Slidin' Away," "Late in the Evening," and starring in a music-themed 1980 film, *One Trick Pony*. In '87, he scored a Grammy for the cross-cultural mix of African rock, zydeco, and pop on *Graceland*. He and Garfunkel would occasionally reunite for events like a '72 benefit concert for George McGovern, Si-



This classic Simon figure introduced "Scarborough Fair." Capoed at the seventh fret, it has a distinctly modal sound that befits the mood made more atmospheric with attractive dissonances, suspensions, and the 3/4 meter. Notice the C#, D, and A added to a simple Em chord in measures 1 and 4, along with D and B added to A in measure 2. The arpeggiations are telling examples of his modified-folk picking style and generate cascades of ear-catching sonorities.



"Hazy Shade of Winter" revealed Simon's rock/blues side with an aggressive, rhythmically driving riff that cycles through a Dm-C-B♭-A progression in the intro and choruses. He rendered the phrase in single notes as four slightly imitative motifs, one for each chord, defining the harmony with combinations of stepwise motion and arpeggio lines. Note the straight pentatonic melody in Dm contrasted by spellings of dominant-seventh ch ords over C, B♭, and A. Played on a 12-string capoed at the fifth fret, he used a thumbpick for a plectrum effect.

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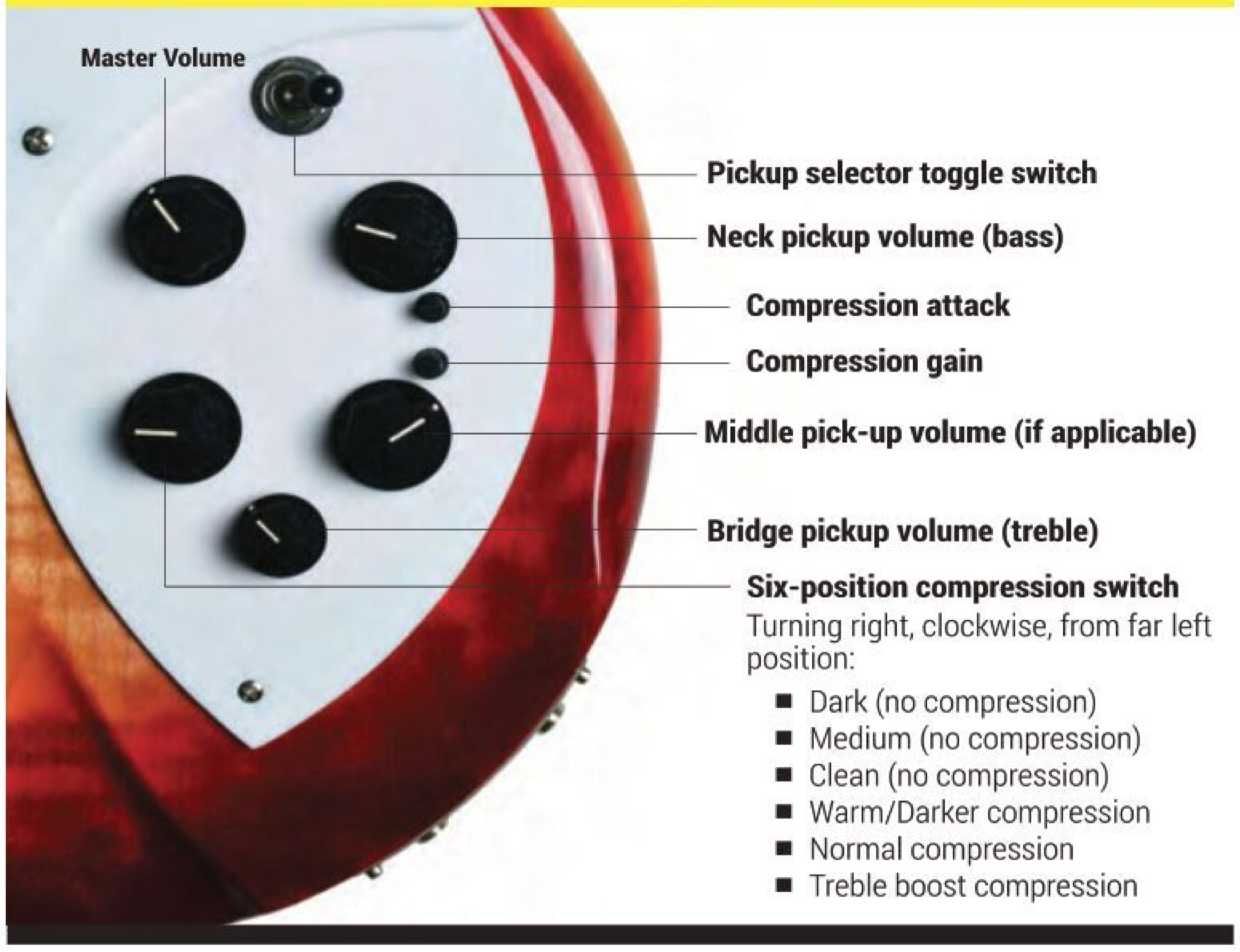

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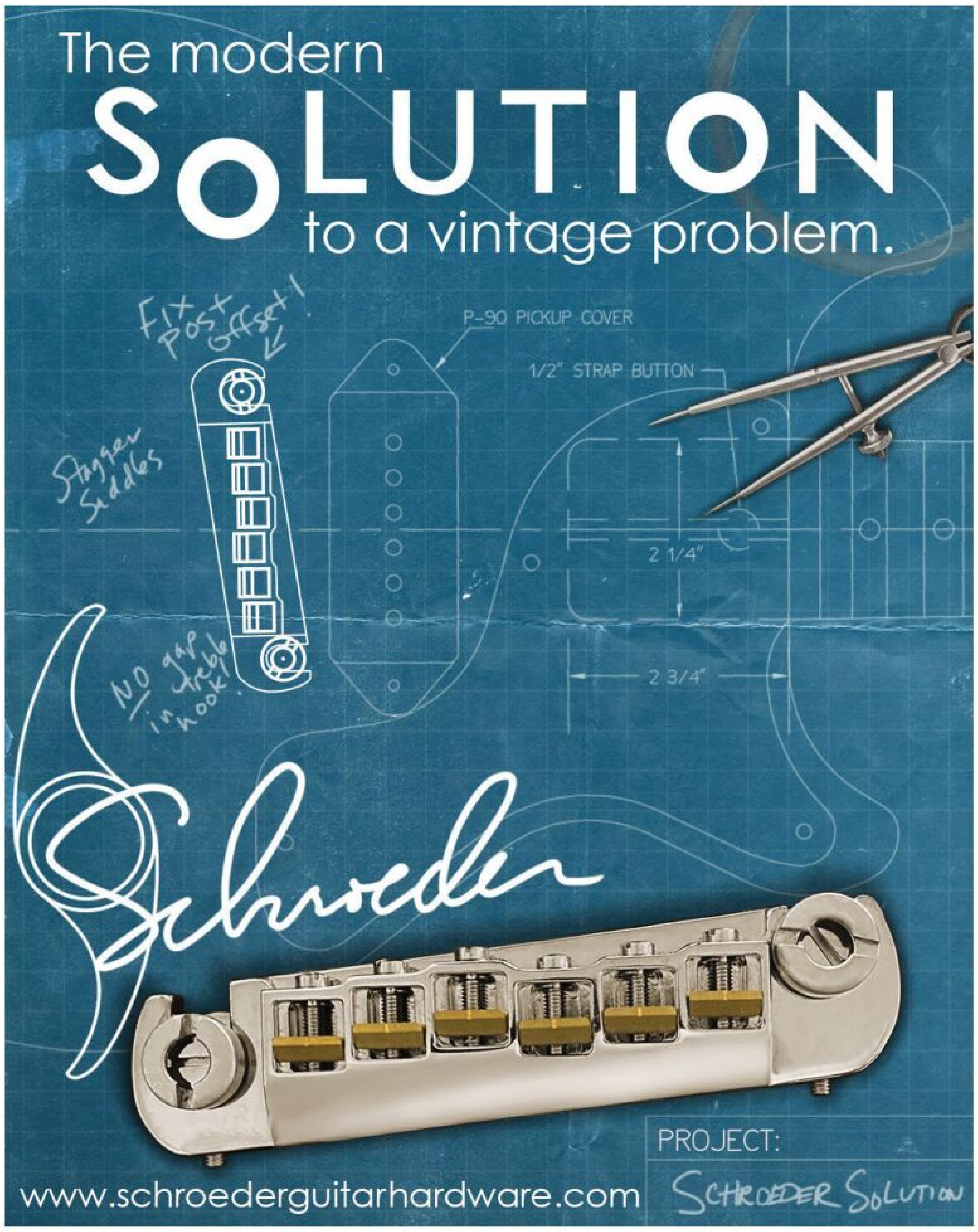
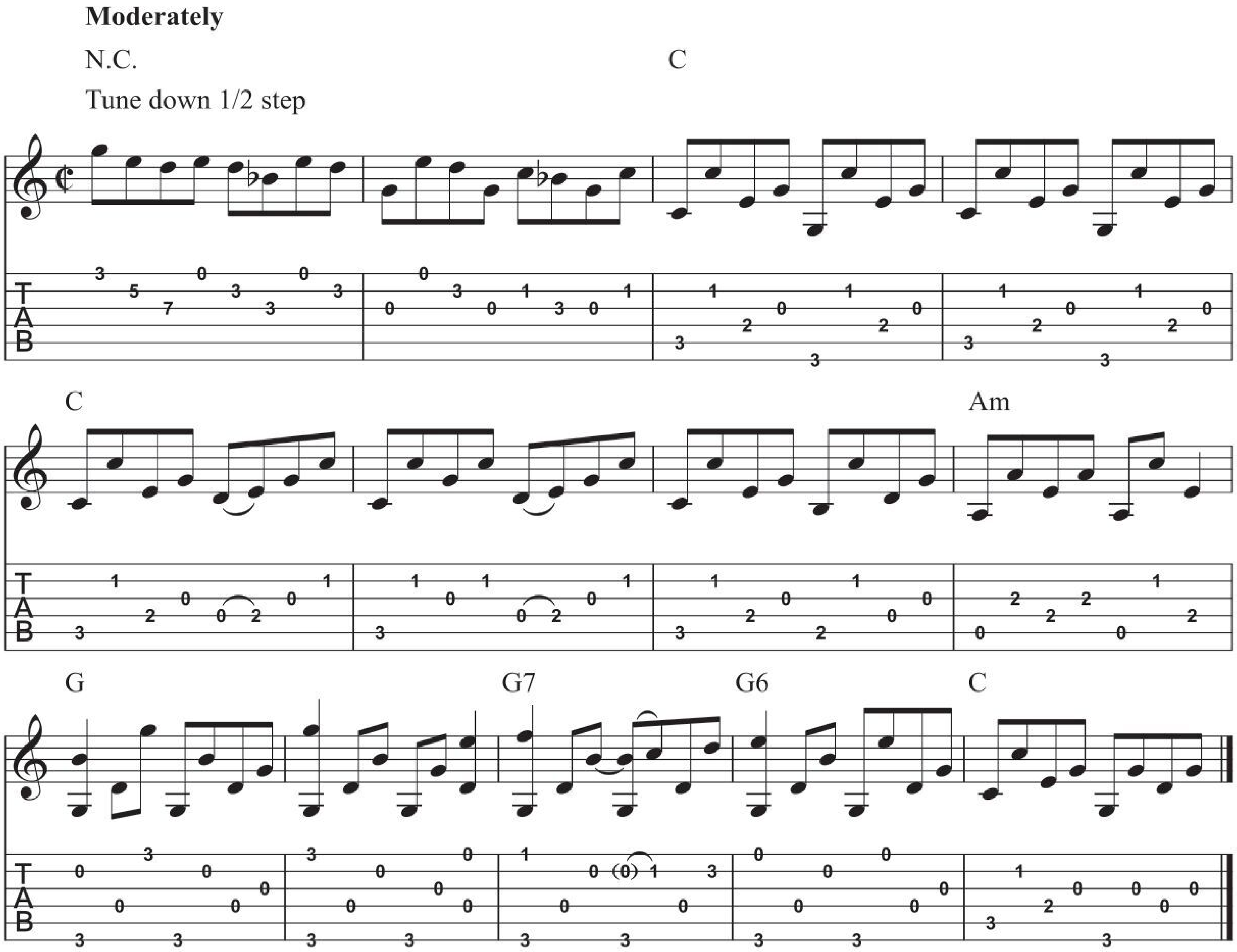


mon's TV hosting of "Saturday Night Live," "The Paul Simon Special," and a '78 charity concert at Carnegie Hall.

By 1980, their individual fortunes had waned, and in September of '81 the duo reunited for *The Concert in Central Park*, which attracted more than 500,000 people and an album that garnered double platinum.



"The Boxer" was among the most memorable songs on *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. Its unusual intro was a highlight, employing an E♭-tuned Martin D-18 with overlapped lines by Fred Carter, Jr. on a 000-18 in alternate tuning (G-A-D-G-B-D) that allowed him to play A-major shapes in C that sound like open B. The first two bars are an arrangement of the opening phrase for standard guitar. In measures 3-10, Simon plays his Travis-picked accompaniment behind the verse.

STYLE

Simon boasts a diverse style informed by numerous genres and artists undergirded by his fingerstyle folk proclivities on guitar and banjo, as on "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream." Early on, he relied on two-finger picking to arpeggiate chords, using picks on his thumb and index finger, as heard on "The Boxer." He freely modified Merle Travis' alternating bass-note/chord-tone patterns to suit the melody in compositions, sometimes beginning on higher chord tones with fingers followed by thumb-attacked bass note. He added his middle finger (without fingerpick) to pick chords for a "cluster" effect, sounding notes together in keyboard fashion. He prized voice leading and textures in his accompaniment, and often pared chords into partial shapes, such as 10th intervals considered more essential and malleable. In "American Tune," he reduced E major to only E and G♯ tones (root and third) and used its inversion G♯/B to approach an Am chord. Variants and seemingly infinite combinations of fingerpicked chords and arpeggiated patterns are found throughout his repertoire, often decorated with stylistic hammer-ons and pull-offs.

Simon has a solid working knowledge of jazz harmony, bossa nova, and classical theory that enhances many of his compositions, like the Brazilian-inspired nylon-string chording on "So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright." In addition to Travis-based fingerpicking and cluster articulation, Simon purveys a strong rhythm-guitar style with strummed chords and flatpicked lines, as in "Hazy Shade of Winter." Check out his strummed grooves and the propulsive rock feel in "I Am a Rock," "Mrs. Robinson," and "Homeward Bound." On his eponymous solo album in '72, he stretched beyond folk-based trappings to feature swing-jazz timekeeping in "Hobo's Blues" and blues-inspired guitar in "Armistice Day," where he applied Open D, a typical rural-blues concession. He also sometimes tuned his guitar down a half or whole step; the former is heard in "The Boxer" and "Kathy's Song." He occasionally used a capo, as on "Scarborough Fair" (seventh fret), "April Come She Will" (first), "The Sound of Silence" (sixth) and "Hazy Shade of Winter" (fifth).

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

Best of Simon & Garfunkel is a serviceable compilation. A more thorough view demands *Bookends* and *Bridge Over Troubled Water* be included in full.

ESSENTIAL VIEWING

There are numerous S&G performances viewable online. Among the most noteworthy are "The Sound of Silence" and "The Boxer" from *Central Park Concert*, a '66 performance on "The Mike Douglas Show," and a host of vintage promo clips.

SOUND

In his early S&G years, Simon favored Guild acoustics, playing two custom F-30 Specials (one with electronics). Both had a smaller, thicker body, Brazilian rosewood back and sides, ebony fretboard, and Grover Rotomatic tuners. He also played a Guild 12-string with a 17" body, inlaid ebony fretboard, and gold Grovers. Other instruments in his '60s arsenal included a Guild bass, Martin D-18S, a 1925 Dobro, Standel electric, and a nylon-string Goya G20.

Wolf Marshall is the founder and original editor-in-chief of *GuitarOne* magazine. A respected author and columnist, he has been influential in contemporary music education since the early 1980s. His books include *101 Must-Know Rock Licks*, *B.B. King: the Definitive Collection*, and *Best of Jazz Guitar*, and a list credits can be found at wolfmarshall.com.

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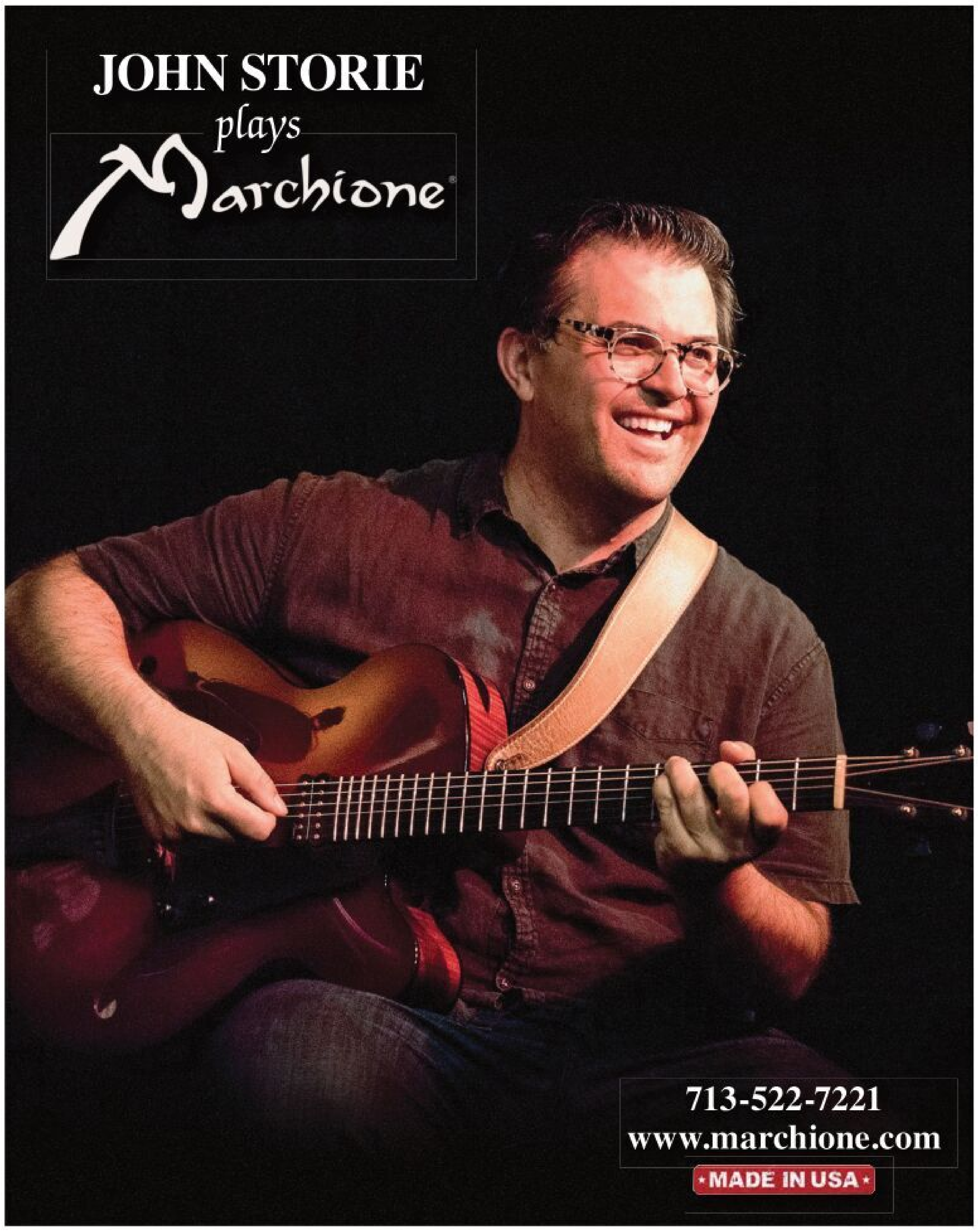
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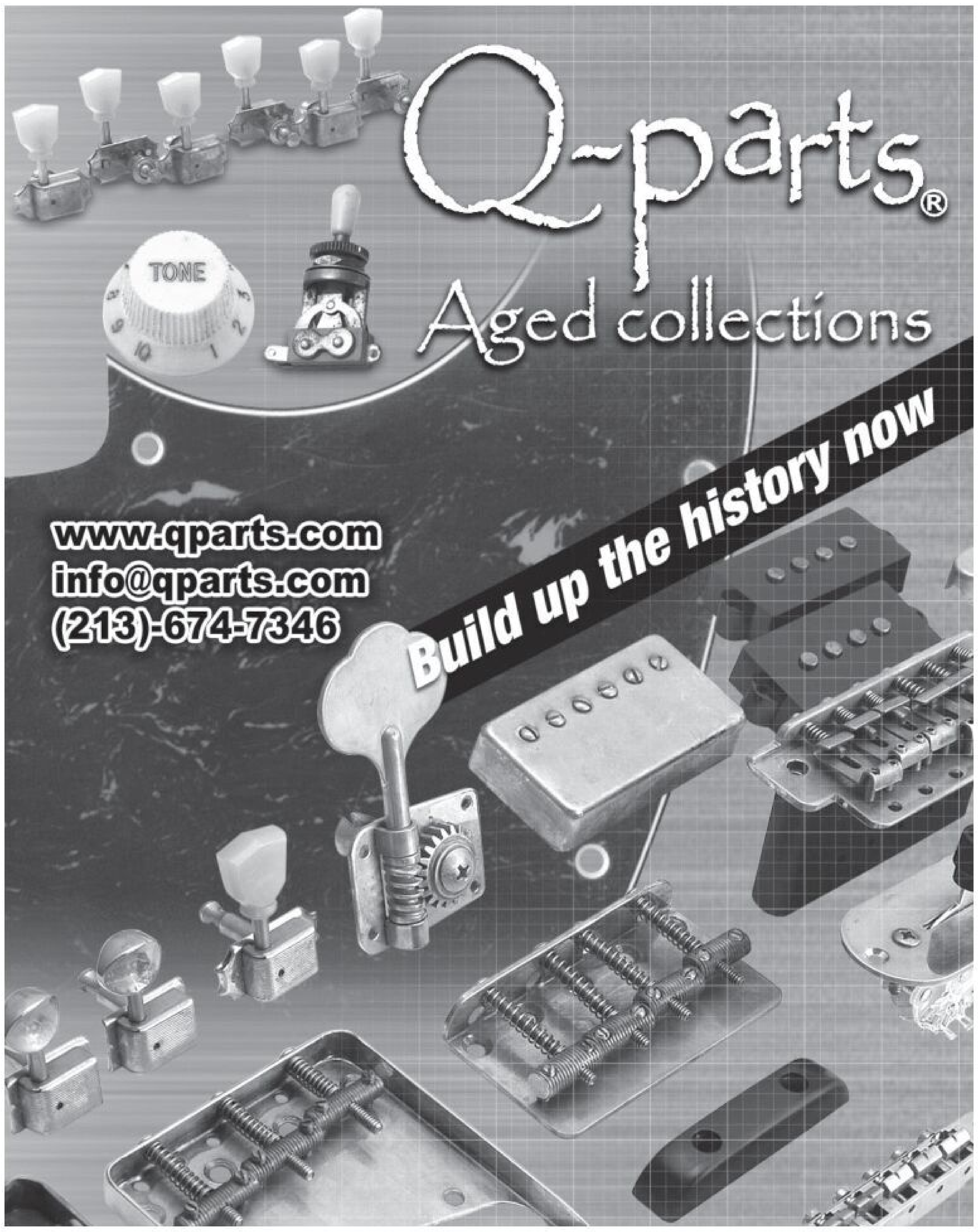
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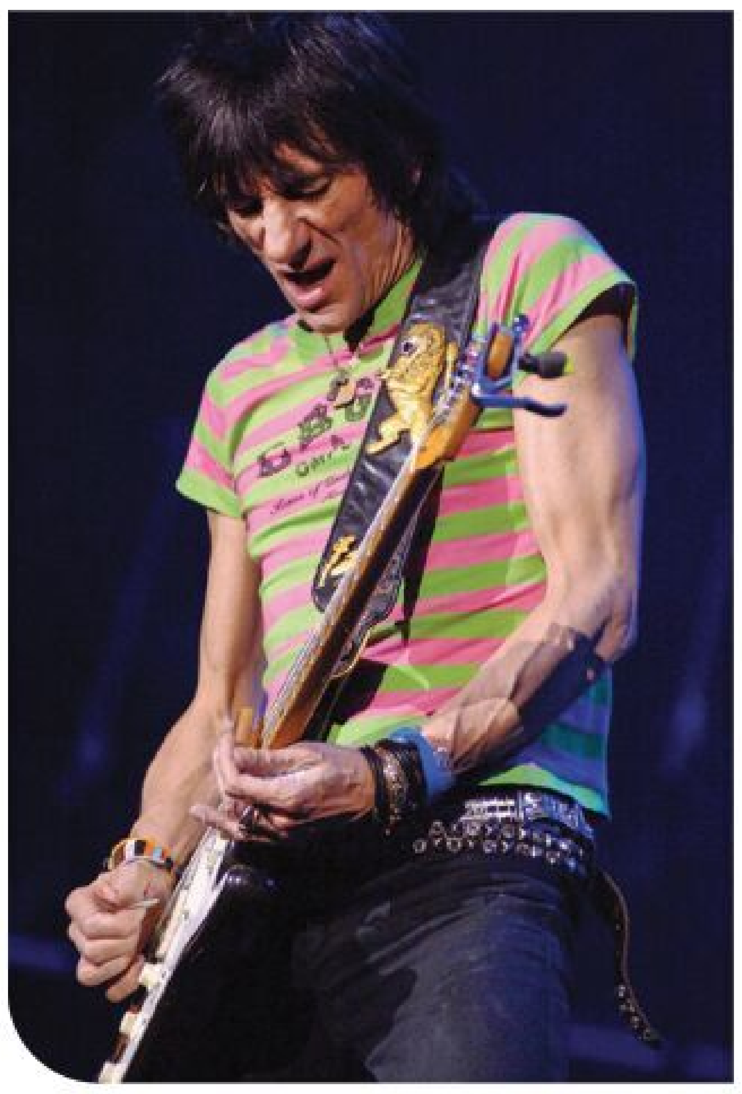
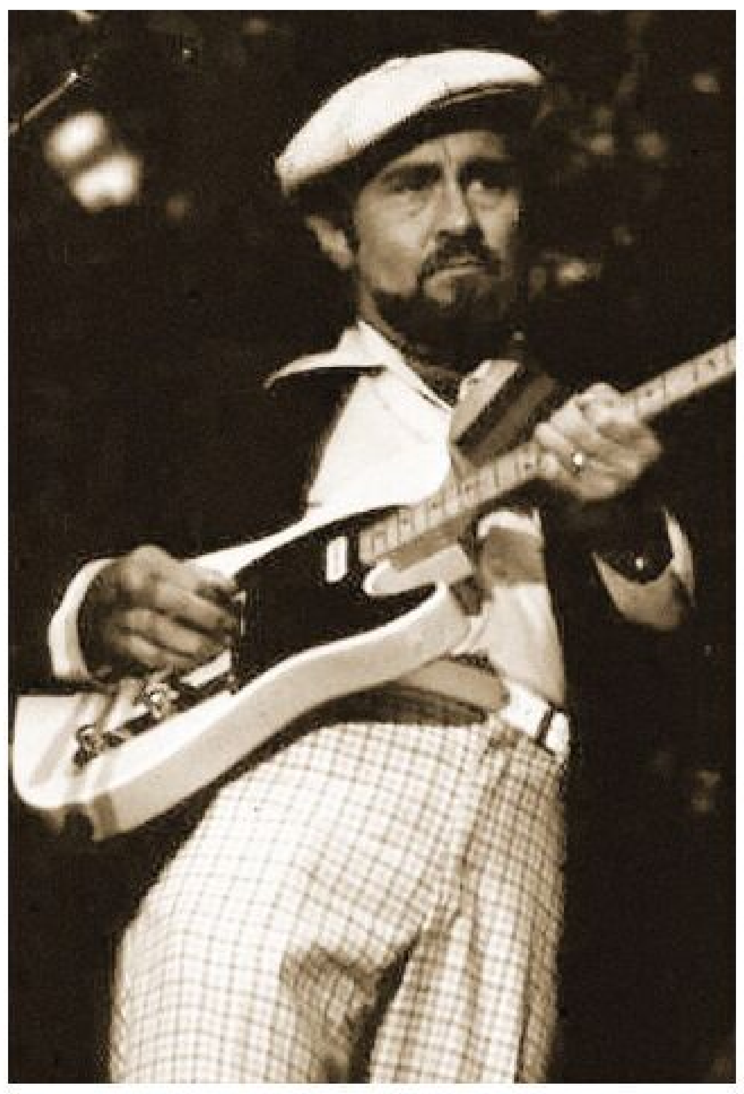
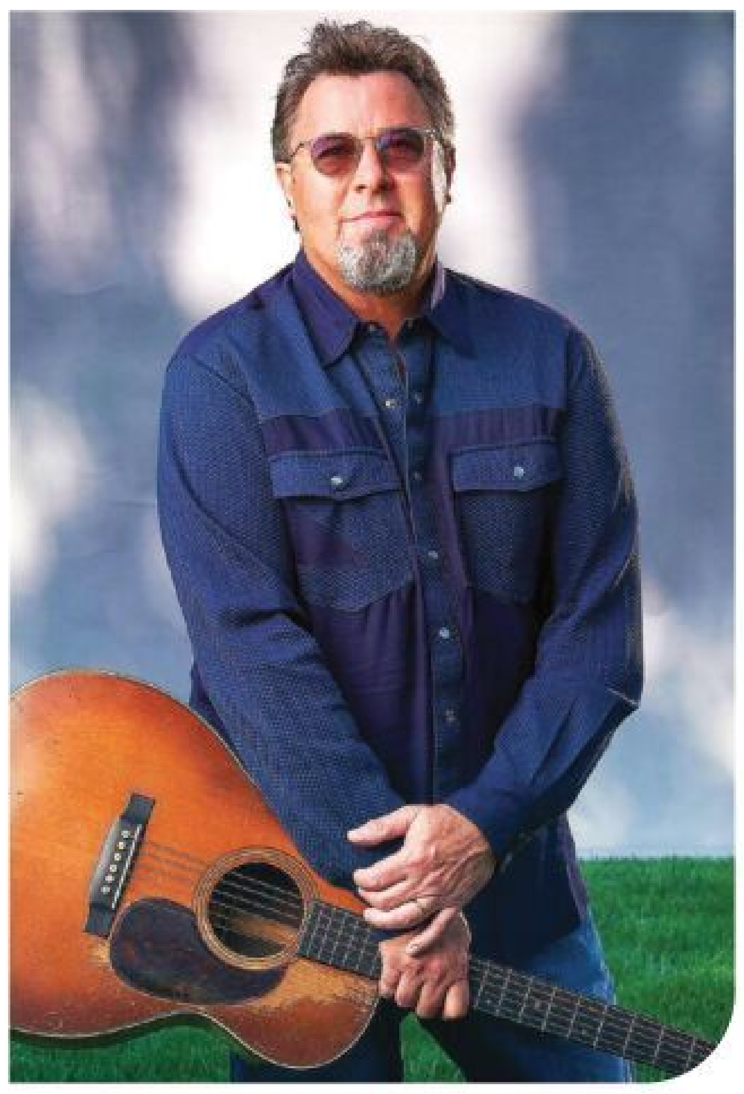
THE 2021 *VG* READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

The *Vintage Guitar* Hall of Fame is filled with legendary names – players who inspired generations of followers to pick up that guitar and play! Inductees are chosen by *VG* readers and visitors to VintageGuitar.com who want to recognize their heroes for their musicianship and innovation. Readers also select Album of the Year, and Player of the Year in four categories. For a list of prior inductees, visit www.VintageGuitar.com/readers-choice/.

Danny Gatton, Mike Campbell, Pat Martino (top), Robben Ford, Tony Rice (middle), Ron Wood, Roy Buchanan, and Vince Gill.

From these nominations, a list of finalists is compiled with input from *VG* staff. Please vote online for an instrument, person, and music! Voting makes you automatically eligible for a chance to win Fender Acoustasonic Telecaster and a Mustang Micro amp valued at more than $2,100.

Deadline for entries is March 21. The contest is open to everyone, but void where prohibited. New inductees and contest winners will be announced in the June '22 issue.

INSTRUMENTS

GIBSON ES-330 Released in 1959 as a cheaper alternative to the ES-335, it had the same 1.25"-deep body but was otherwise very different – the most pronounced change being its P-90 pickups and a neck that joined the body at the 16th fret. Its lack of a center block made it more prone to feedback, which pushed away players of popular '60s blues-rock. Today, semi-hollow collectors see it as an important piece, and a (much) more-affordable alternative to the 335.

GIBSON F-5 Instroduced in 1922, the Style 5 Master Model series of four instruments designed by acoustical engineer Lloyd Loar was a platform for innovation. Loar moved the mando's bridge closer to the center of a graduated/tap-tuned top, gave it f-shaped sound holes on each lower bout rather than the center oval, put parallel tone bars under the top instead of one small cross bar, then extended and elevated the fretboard, freeing the top to vibrate. In the eyes, hands, and ears of players and collectors, no mandolin comes close.

MARSHALL JCM 800 2203 When it hit the market in 1981, the JCM 800 series represented a departure from Marshall's '60s/early-'70s amps, which were tame until pushed hard. Players wanted hotter front-end gain and greater control over output, and the 800 delivered. Introduced mid-decade,

Danny Gatton: VG Archive. Mike Campbell: Sheva Kafai. Robben Ford: VG Archive.
Tony Rice: Steven Stone/VG Archive. Ron Wood: VG Archive. Vince Gill: VG Archive.

Gibson ES-330, Guild F-512 , Gibson F-5, and a Marshall JCM 800 2203.

the 100-watt 2203 Lead Series, with its Master Volume control, became symbolic of stadium rock a la Slash in GnR, Zakk Wylde with Ozzy, Kerry King in Slayer, and countless others. When most think "cranked Marshall," this is the amp.

GUILD F-512 The '60s folk revival reignited the 12-string sounds created by Leadbelly and Blind Willie McTell, and major builders responded with new instruments. Though it followed Gibson's B-45-12 and Martin's D-12 to market, Guild's jumbo-sized F-512 had a rosewood body and ornamentation that rivaled the competition. In the hands of Pete Townshend, Brian May, Tim Buckley, John Denver, and Dan Fogelberg, it kept the 12-string in the minds of players through the '70s. Stevie Ray Vaughan did his part, as well, when he used the fanciest version (JF65-12) on a rippin' "Rude Mood" to open an early episode of MTV's "Unplugged" in 1990.

PLAYERS

DANNY GATTON His uncategorizable playing style meshed country, rockabilly, and jazz. Dubbed "The Humbler," he honed his chops in clubs in his hometown Washington, D.C. area (including with his own Redneck Jazz Explosion band, where he traded licks with steel-guitar legend Buddy Emmons) before being noticed by bigger names in the business including Les Paul and Eric Clapton. In 1990, he was nominated for a Grammy for Best Rock Instrumental Performance for the song "Elmira Street Boogie."

MIKE CAMPBELL Tom Petty's sideman going back to their earliest days in Jacksonville, he was the creative spur who co-wrote "Refugee," "Here Comes My Girl," "You Got Lucky," and the lick seared into *every* guitarist's brain, "Runnin' Down a Dream." Throughout the Heartbreakers' run, his leads were an integral melodic element, often making the songs identifiable before a lyric was sung. Outside the group, his session playing likewise boosted the work of Don Henley, Stevie Nicks, and others. With Petty and Heartbreakers, he's in the Rock Hall of Fame.

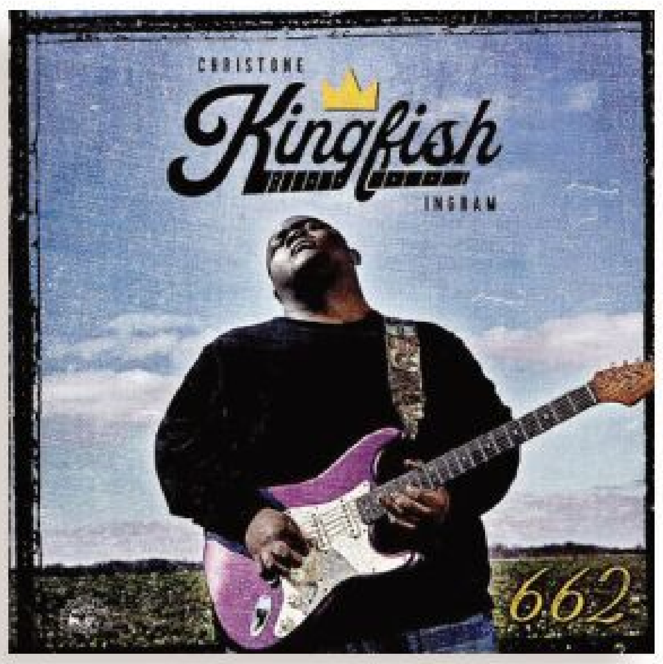
ROBBEN FORD A five-time Grammy nominee, his use of space, time, chord voicings, and diminished passing tones has mined the sweet spot between sophisticated jazz harmony and traditional blues. With a reverence for B.B. King, Mike Bloomfield, John Coltrane, and Paul Desmond, he built a career on artistic integrity, mirroring his influences without mimicking them. A sought-after session player, he backed Miles Davis before recording a string of critically acclaimed solo albums straddling blues-rock, jazz, and fusion. Today, he shares his knowledge via video, online lessons, and clinics.

PAT MARTINO Raised by a jazz-loving father who sang in clubs, Martino was just 15 when when he moved to New York City in 1961, to play guitar professionally. His career flourished for two decades as he backed renowned horn players and pianists while also releasing 12 solo albums. In 1980, he nearly died after suffering a seizure due to congenital arteriovenous malformation. Surgery left him with amnesia and no recollection of his career or how to play. Devoting himself to re-learning, his next album was the 1987 live effort, *The Return*. He would release 15 more, the last being *Formidable*, in 2017. He died in November of '21, leaving a legacy and musical philosophy that will inspire generations of jazz guitarists.

RONNIE WOOD Born in London's Hillingdon section, at 17 he was playing guitar with a band of locals inspired by R&B and smitten with the rock music imported from the U.S. In '68, he was recruited to play bass in the Jeff Beck Group, then jumped back to guitar in The Faces. When that group dissolved in the wake of Rod Stewart's exit, fortunate timing saw Wood replace Mick Taylor in the Rolling Stones. Therein, he has played guitar, slide, steel, pedal steel, sitar, and a B-bender'd Tele. He has

See page 59 for your chance to win a Fender Acoustasonic Tele and Mustang Micro valued at $2,100! Vote online at www.VintageGuitar.com/Readers-Choice.

'59 Gibson ES-330: VG Archive. Guild F-512: George Gruhn/VG Archive. Gibson F-5: George Gruhn/VG Archive.



recorded seven solo albums; 2010's stylistically diverse *I Feel Like Playing* includes appearances by Billy Gibbons and Slash. He has twice been inducted to the Rock Hall of Fame.

TONY RICE Influenced by Clarence White's flatpicking, he became a master guitarist and vocalist with a complex musical vision that transcended bluegrass while embracing jazz and modern folk music. For most of his career, Rice played the Martin D-28 that once belonged to White; his rhythm playing was smooth and propulsive, and as a soloist, his superbly articulated solos were marked by cascades of well-chosen and cleanly picked notes that often injected new harmonic ideas that have inspired today's best young fingerstylists, including Bryan Sutton, Molly Tuttle, and Billy Strings.

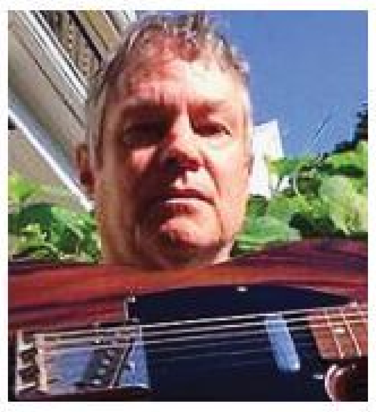
VINCE GILL The Oklahoma native grew up playing bluegrass (including a stint in Ricky Skaggs' Bone Creek) and absorbing the sounds of his heroes, including Buck Owens. He recorded three albums with '70s country-rockers Pure Prairie League, then moved to Nashville to work sessions, write songs, and back Rodney Crowell and Emmylou Harris. His name ranks among the world's best guitarists (in any genre) and his credits include 26 million albums sold, 18 CMA awards, membership in the Grand Ole Opry, and 20 Grammys.

ROY BUCHANAN He emerged as a kid from the Ozarks with prodigious ability and flare for copping Roy Nichols' style – until he discovered the blues. As a teen, he began to develop a unique, unbounded style that touched on virtually every pop-music genre. With his renowned '53 Tele, Buchanan employed an arsenal of technique with an emotive force that sang, soared, screamed, whispered and wailed. His work is exemplified by his first two solo albums and remained top-notch until his passing in 1988.

INNOVATORS

NAT DANIEL As a teen, he developed an interest in radio that spread to guitar amps. In the mid '30s, he began building amps of his own design, which led to founding Danelectro, maker of the budget instruments that launched thousands of players. He holds patents on tremolo and reverb amp circuits, as well as a combined bridge/tailpiece for guitars, but didn't even *pursue* patents on several amazing innovations including the six-string electric bass, the 12-string electric Bellzouki, the "amp in case" rig, and the acoustic/electric "convertible" guitar.

NED STEINBERGER A trained sculptor and woodworker/cabinet maker, Steinberger met luthier Stuart Spector at a woodworking co-op in 1976. Fascinated by ergonomics, he conceived ways to improve the way guitars and basses fit the human body; his previous work creating shells for car seats led him to consider carbon fiber for instruments because of it high stiffness-to-weight ratio. The result was the NS bass, which lacked a headstock and placed the tuners at the end of a very small lower bout. At the height of its popularity, it was played worldwide and in music videos by Sting, the Rolling Stones, Dixie Dregs, Rush, and others. The guitar version's Trans-Trem was also evolutionary.



BILL FINNEGAN Setting out to build an overdrive pedal that re-created the sound of his Twin Reverb driven to its sweet spot, guitarist Finnegan teamed with an electronics engineer to create the Klon Centaur. Launched in late 1994, its immediate popularity forced Finnegan to quit his day job and become a one-man shop; using germanium clipping diodes, a cast enclosure, and custom-made knobs, by 2008, he hand-built approximately 8,000 Centaurs before devising the mass-produced KTR version. Today, originals are amongst the most sought-after effects pedals.

ROBERT KEELEY A third-generation electronics engineer, Keeley has been enthralled by electronics since childhood. As a college student, he built home-audio amplifiers and tube guitar amps for friends. One day, he cracked open his Ibanez Tube Screamer to see how he could improve its bass response and add range to its Gain control. The result had friends and other players wanting the same, and he founded an effects company built on the concept. After several years specializing in mods, in 2001, they turned to making original boxes including compressors, boosts, modulation, delay/echo, and wahs.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

BILLY STRINGS *Renewal*
SAMANTHA FISH *Faster*
BLACK KEYS *Delta Kream*
CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM *662*
TEDESCHI TRUCKS *Layla Revisited (Live at LOCKN')*

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

VG's Player of the Year nominations are chosen by staff and followers of VintageGuitar.com and based on each players' efforts (recorded, live, etc.). We offer nominees in four categories.

ROCK

BILLY GIBBONS
JOE BONAMASSA
JOHN MAYER
MIKE CAMPBELL
KENNY WAYNE SHEPHER

BLUES

CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM
DEREK TRUCKS
SAMANTHA FISH
DAN AUERBACH
JIMMIE VAUGHAN

COUNTRY

VINCE GILL
KENNY VAUGHAN
BRENT MASON
BILLY STRINGS
KEITH URBAN

JAZZ

PAT MARTINO
BILL FRISELL
JULIAN LAGE
ROBBEN FORD
LARRY CARLTON

Nat Daniel courtesy Howard Daniel. Robert Keeley: VG Archive, courtesy Keeley Electronics. Bill Finnegan: Bill Finnegan/Instagram.

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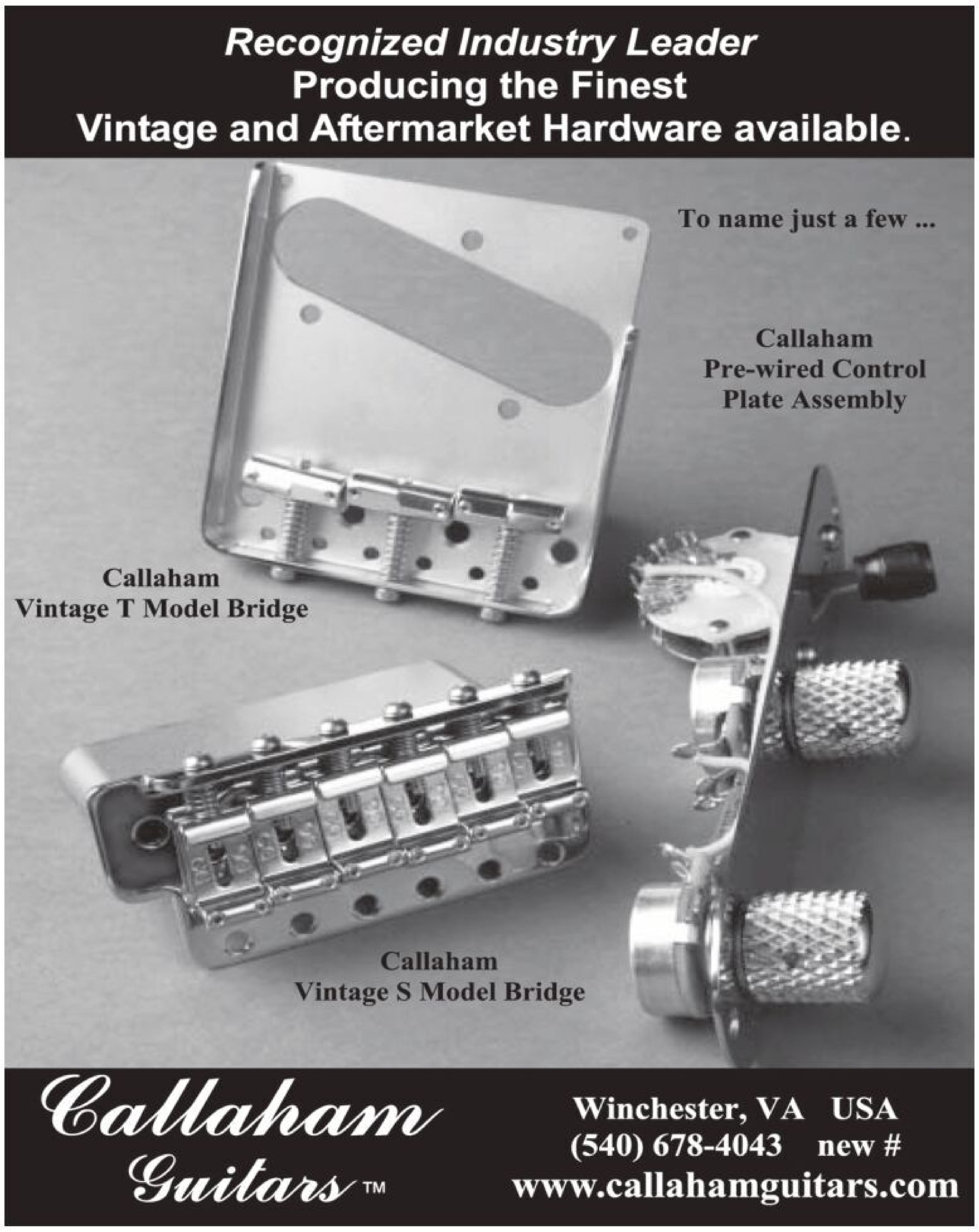
VG Readers' Choice Giveaway rules: No purchase necessary. One entry per customer. Void where prohibited. Deadline for entries is March 25, 2022. Winners will be drawn at random. *Vintage Guitar* reserves the right to identify winners in the magazine.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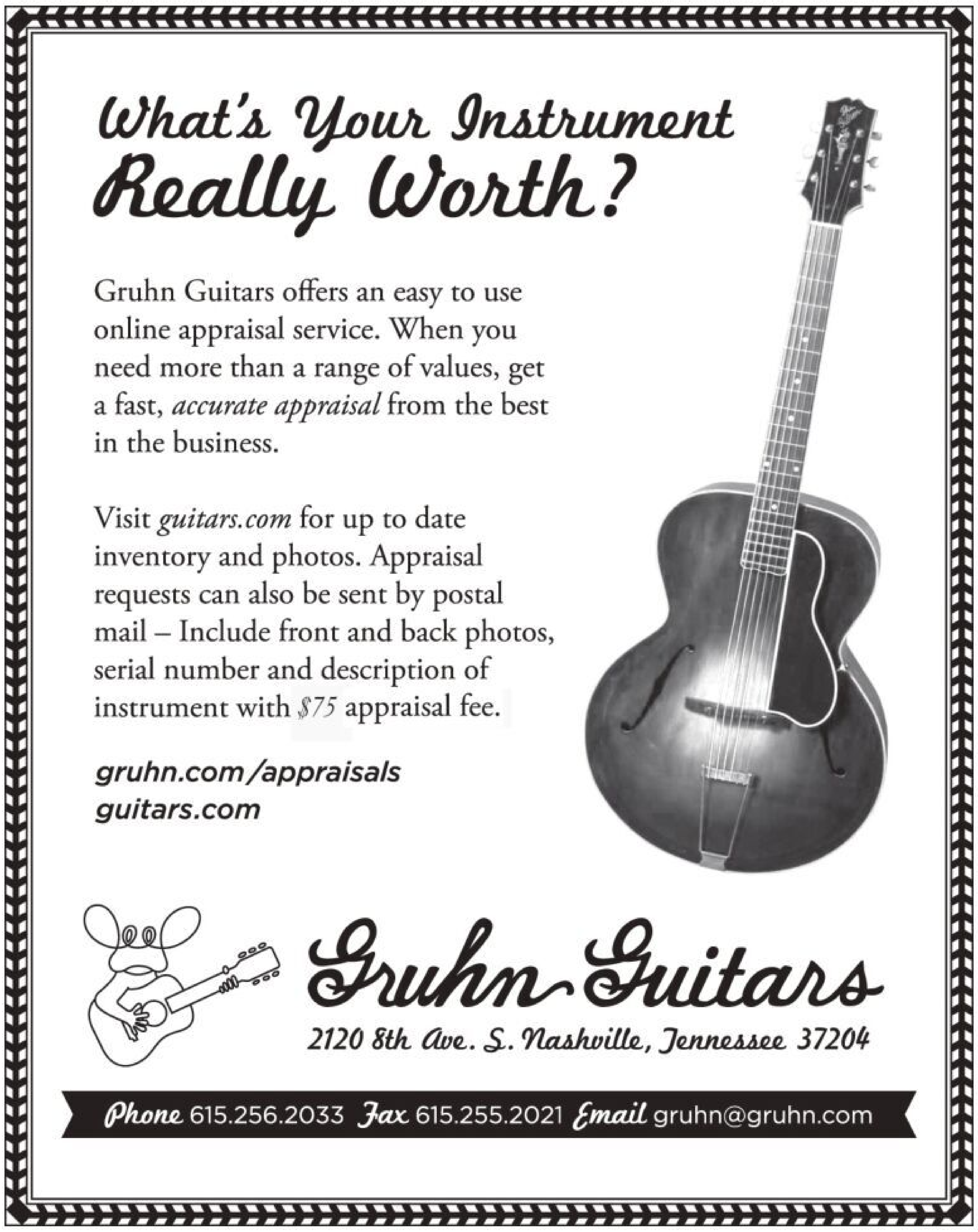
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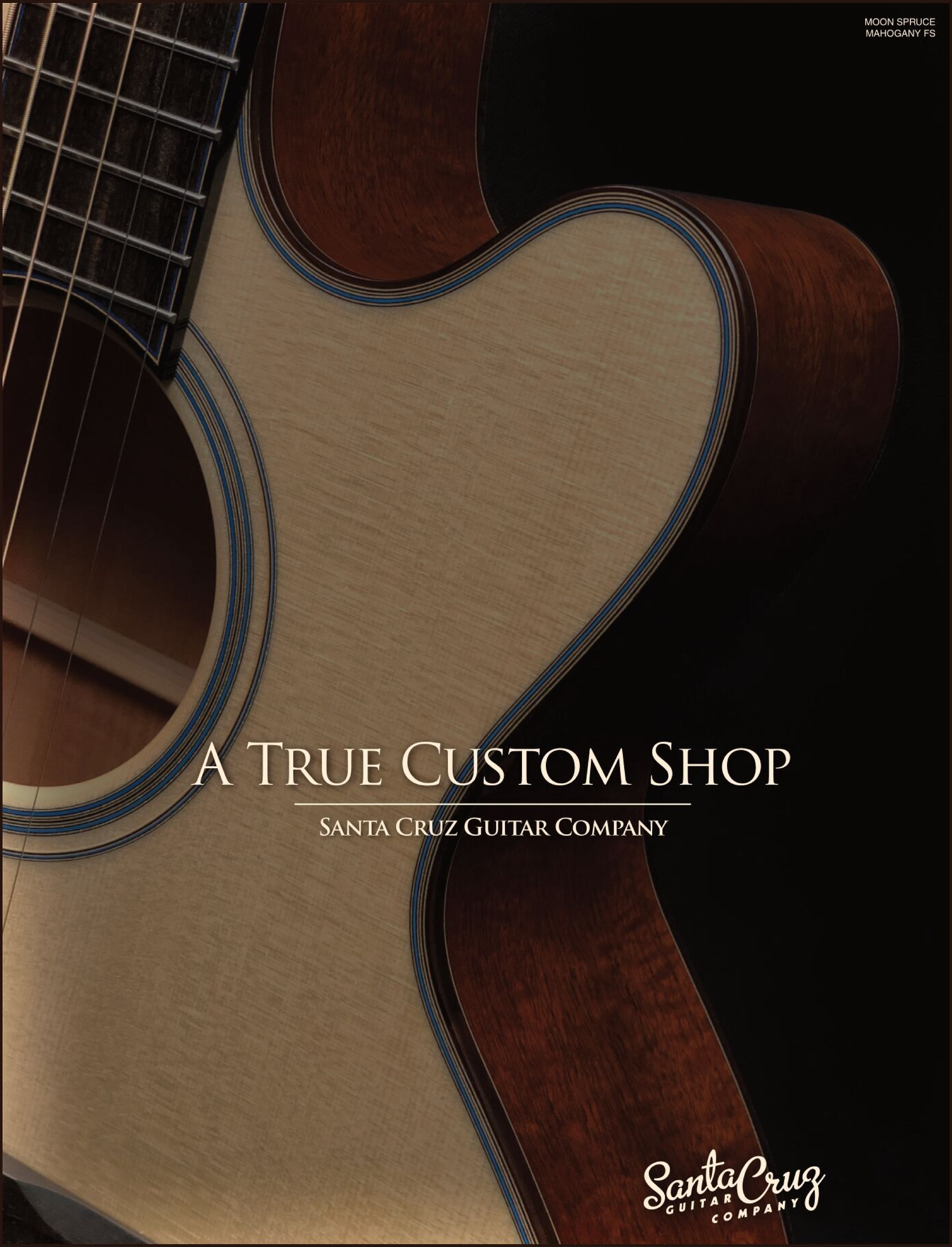

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From 1957 to '60, guitarist Barney Kessel, bassist Ray Brown, and drummer Shelly Manne recorded four LPs for Contemporary Records as a group called Poll Winners, a byproduct of each topping reader polls in *Playboy* and the jazz magazines *DownBeat* and *Metronome*. As a guitar/bass/drums group, they were a cutting-edge departure from the piano trio.

"To my knowledge, they were the first example of guitar taking that responsibility in the rhythm section," said Bruce Forman, a close friend who was mentored by Kessel and toured with him. "(Now,) you can't go anywhere without finding a guitar trio, but few people realize how novel that was."

With drummer Jeff Hamilton and bassist John Clayton, Forman has just released *Reunion!*, a revisiting of the Poll Winners albums recorded on original gear; Clayton owns one of Brown's uprights, they borrowed a Leedy drum set (from Gary Hobbs) that Manne used in the early '60s, and Forman played Kessel's famous late-'40s Gibson ES-350.

Bruce Forman 2021: Patrick Tregenza.

Reunited

“We’ve been playing together for 40 years in ensembles, studios, and bands, and every one of us played with Barney, Ray, and Shelly, so it’s a very incestuous group,” Forman chuckled.

A young musician when they first met in the mid ’70s, Forman admits that Kessel’s stylistic impact on his playing was not huge.

“I was more influenced by other instruments – horns and piano,” he said. Nonetheless, he adds, “I always loved his playing and the way he swung so hard. I think that’s why Barney liked me; we got a lot of information from the same places.”

Impressed by Forman’s individuality, Kessel took him on the road. During those tours, Forman learned much about his storied career.

The *Reunion!* concept occurred to Forman several years ago, but acquiring Kessel’s 350 gave him the impetus to forge ahead, the intent being to project the spontaneity and humor of the original LPs through each player’s style while emulating the Poll Winners’ practice of working out songs during the sessions.

“I was very well aware of those records, how they arranged things super-loose (with) chords and melody lines and textures so it was very pianistic,” Forman said. “I made it very clear to the guys – and they didn’t want to do it, either – no transcribing, no copying. It was just taking their instruments and making music with them, in the same spirit of getting together and playing without a bunch of rehearsals or arrangements.”

Five *Reunion!* songs are Forman originals, including “Hammer’s Back in Town,” showcasing Hamilton; Clayton penned “BRS” (Barney/Ray/Shelly). Several were covers; Forman and Hamilton interjected a bit of “Malaguena” and a flamenco flavor to “Green Dolphin Street,” while on Kurt Weill’s ballad, “This is New,” Forman incorporated Kessel’s classic four-bar opening from Julie London’s 1954 vocal hit, “Cry Me a River.” He calls it, “The most famous thing Barney ever played. I imagined an arrangement where I could repurpose it in a creative way by paying respect to the most iconic thing he played.”

They honored Kessel’s admiration for the Count Basie Orchestra by re-creating the band’s 1955 hit version of “April in Paris” note-for-note (“No blowing, just putting our little stamp on it,” Forman said), and Clayton rearranged Brown’s instrumental “Gravy Waltz” with a new $^4/_4$ intro.

BRUCE FORMAN HONORS BARNEY KESSEL

By Rich Kienzle

The closing track, the Clovers’ 1959 R&B hit “Love Potion #9,” was based on a version Forman heard when a friend’s band played it. “I thought, ‘This is the exact kind of song Barney and Ray did!’ Through Barney’s career, there were funny little songs he pulled out of the pop can – ditties. Ray liked to do that, too. It seemed to me, ‘We gotta do this tune!’” Their arrangement honored Manne’s swinging, finger-snapping work on Peggy Lee’s hit version of “Fever,” Forman calling it “‘Fever’ meets ‘Love Potion #9.’

“John came up with his own bass line. It worked out really well and makes a great ending to the record.”

Despite approaching the material through their own eyes, Forman wanted to replicate the audio, though the original Contemporary Records studio in L.A. was long gone. Guitarist/friend Josh Smith volunteered his Flat V Studio in Reseda, California.

“He was so generous, and had old gear. We did two days, though I’m pretty sure everything on the record is from the first day. We played each tune once or twice, then moved on.”

To re-create the original mic setups, Forman turned to the son of Contemporary founder/owner/producer Lester Koenig.

“John Koenig sent pictures of the original sessions, so we knew which mics they used, how they miked the instruments, and how they set up. We didn’t copy that exactly, but we did get real close. That’s why it sounds so good. They used really interesting mixing techniques that also worked for us.”

Using Kessel’s 350 became a learning experience, particularly because of its Charlie Christian pickup.

“I had that guitar for only a month before I made the record. I was like, ‘Whoa! This has other things goin’ on!’ If we make subsequent records, people will hear how me and the guitar got to know each other better.”

With a strong response to the album, Forman, Clayton, and Hamilton, who each lead their own bands, may continue occasional performances (pandemic permitting), and possibly do another record.

“We’ve done a few gigs that have been really fun and exciting,” said Forman. “It looks like we’re gonna keep going for a while.

“It just goes to show that if you have a good idea, stick with it. Don’t give up.”

Rusty Russell contributed to this piece.

FIVE THINGS BRUCE FORMAN LEARNED FROM BARNEY KESSEL

Bruce Forman was becoming established on the San Francisco jazz scene when a promoter working with the legendary Great American Music Hall decided to book him alongside Barney Kessel for an evening gig. That night began a relationship that would last the rest of Kessel’s life. While Forman allows that Kessel “never treated me like a student, but more like just a fellow musician,” he learned volumes from the jazz legend. Here are Bruce’s top five kernels of Kessel jazz wisdom:

1) Swing. Make it feel good, commit to what you’re doing, 100 percent!

2) Play fearlessly and don’t be afraid to make a mistake! When you get an idea, it’s your responsibility to flesh it out and deal with eventualities.

3) Melody implies harmony and vice versa, and they both imply rhythm.

4) Motifs. Listen to yourself, build on what’s already happening.

5) Strategy. Be smart; arrange while you play, give yourself an outline, a goal, and a concept. Don’t just spew licks. *– Rusty Russell*

RETURN OF AN ICON

BARNEY KESSEL'S ES-350 RIDES AGAIN

By Rusty Russell

Bruce Forman acquired Barney Kessel's beloved Gibson ES-350 in mid 2021. In prep for recording *Reunion!*, he made the guitar his exclusive daily player.

"All it needed was a little setup, and I put flatwounds on because that's what Barney used," Forman said. "I did, too, for years, but haven't in a long while, so that took some getting used to.

"I saw that guitar come out of its case *so* many nights, and heard all that amazing stuff coming out of it," he added. "I was on tour with him in New Zealand and Australia in 1988, and because my Ibanez was a 16", the airline let me carry it on. But he had to check the Gibson, and when he opened the case at baggage claim after one flight, the headstock was broken off. He had to borrow guitars the rest of the tour. He had the 350 fixed and used it the rest of his career, but they didn't do the greatest repair job. It's not pretty, but it's *that* guitar! Nobody can do what Barney did on it, but it has the vibe. His juju is in there!"

Kessel-family anecdotes and photos suggest Barney owned *two* ES-350s. Each started life with a single P-90, marking them as Premier models from '46 or '47, and both were likely acquired in the late '40s/early '50s. Each was also heavily modified (see sidebar).

Kessel's star in the jazz world began rising as early as '51, when he joined Norman Granz's Jazz At The Philharmonic program. In that congregate, he met Brown and a young Canadian pianist named Oscar Peterson; Barney would spend much of '51 and '52 with Brown in The Oscar Peterson Trio, one of the most important ensembles in jazz. By the end of '52, Herb Ellis had replaced Kessel.

Kessel is best known as one of the greatest jazz guitarists in history. But from the early '50s on, he built and maintained a second career as one of the most successful and noted studio musicians; his dates number in the thousands – for Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday (that's him on "Body And Soul"), Julie London, and dozens of other jazz-leaning stars of era. In the '60s and '70s heyday of L.A.'s fabled Wrecking Crew, he played as many pop sessions as any guitarist on the scene, including dates for Sonny and Cher, The Righteous Brothers, Elvis Presley, and Lou Rawls. Brian Wilson wrote a touching letter to Barney, thankful for his contributions to The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*.

Kessel played any number of guitars in his pop session work, from Telecasters to flat-tops (even mandolin and banjo). Steve Howe has told of reading about how Barney said, "You need eight guitars to be a studio musician," and credits his own gravitation to the Gibson ES-175 to seeing Barney's "big, hollow guitar" on album covers. But for Barney's jazz work – his preferred focus – once he settled on the ES-350, he stayed with it for the remainder of his career.

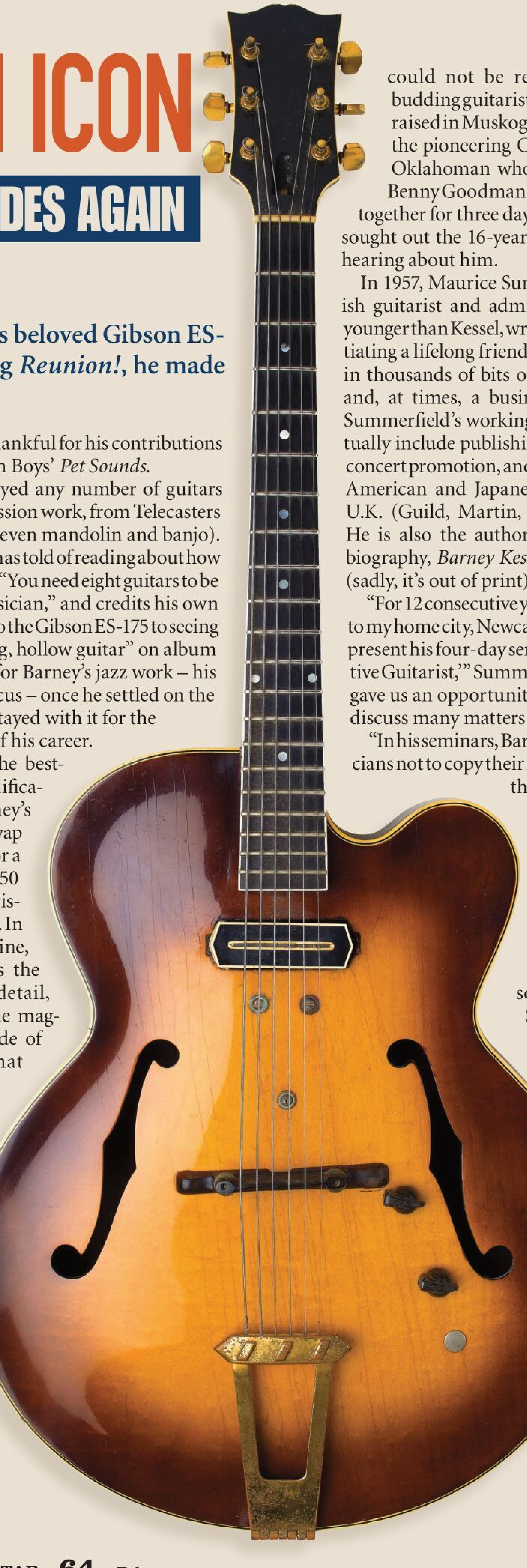
Perhaps the best-known modification to Barney's 350s is the swap of its P-90 for a Gibson ES-150 "Charlie Christian" pickup. In a video online, he describes the pickup in detail, declaring the magnet was made of an alloy that could not be reproduced. As a budding guitarist, Kessel, born and raised in Muskogee, was dazzled by the pioneering Christian, a fellow Oklahoman who was a star with Benny Goodman. The two jammed together for three days when Christian sought out the 16-year-old Barney after hearing about him.

In 1957, Maurice Summerfield, a British guitarist and admirer several years younger than Kessel, wrote to his hero, initiating a lifelong friendship that resulted in thousands of bits of correspondence and, at times, a business relationship. Summerfield's working life would eventually include publishing, guitar design, concert promotion, and importing noted American and Japanese brands to the U.K. (Guild, Martin, D'Addario, etc.). He is also the author of the excellent biography, *Barney Kessel: A Jazz Legend* (sadly, it's out of print).

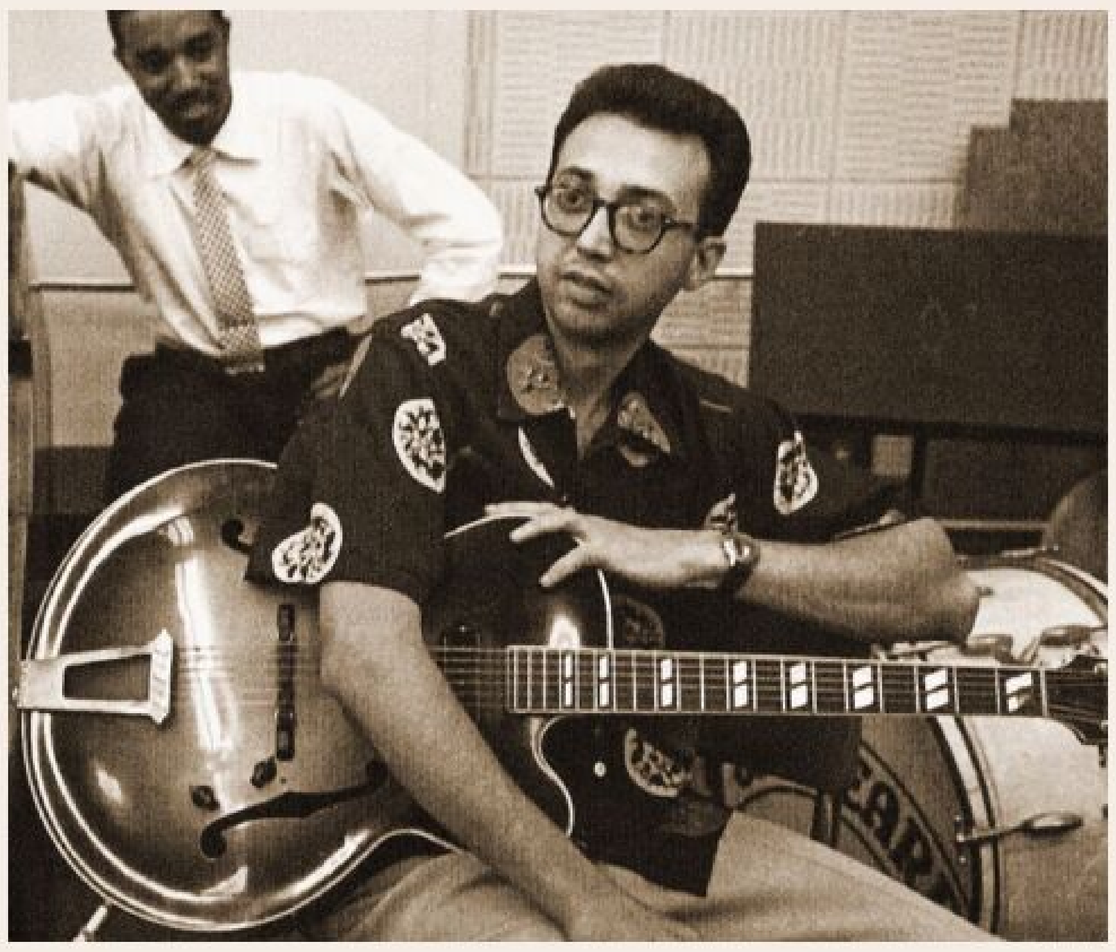
"For 12 consecutive years, Barney came to my home city, Newcastle upon Tyne, to present his four-day seminar, 'The Effective Guitarist,'" Summerfield said. "That gave us an opportunity to socialize and discuss many matters – not just music.

"In his seminars, Barney advised musicians not to copy their heroes, but to find their own voice. He confirmed that, as a teenager, he copied the sound of Charlie Christian, but then soon developed his own distinctive sound and style."

Summerfield was also behind a guitar model that



Guitar photos by Patrick Tregenza.



Barney Kessel in the Oscar Peterson Trio (that's bassist Ray Brown behind him) with the ES-350 prior to installation of the ES-150 pickup and ebony fretboard, and with the modified guitar in 1968.

THE MYSTERIOUS MOD SQUAD

Guitar modifications are common today, but in the 1940s and '50s, few thought about seriously altering a nice guitar; except for the, "We got drunk one night and stuck all the peace signs on it" craze in the '60s, major mods were scarce until Eddie Van Halen began gouging holes in parts-o-casters.

But in the early '50s, Barney Kessel knew what he wanted his guitars to sound and feel like – and wasn't shy about modifying his two ES-350s.

Each first received a pickup swap. In place of the original P-90, Kessel installed a Gibson ES-150 "Charlie Christian" pickup. Both also were given new fretboards; the one on Forman's was replaced with a 20-fret ebony board with dot markers (stock was also 20 frets, but rosewood with parallelograms). On the other, Kessel had the neck extended, bumping into the pickup edge with a 22-fret board.

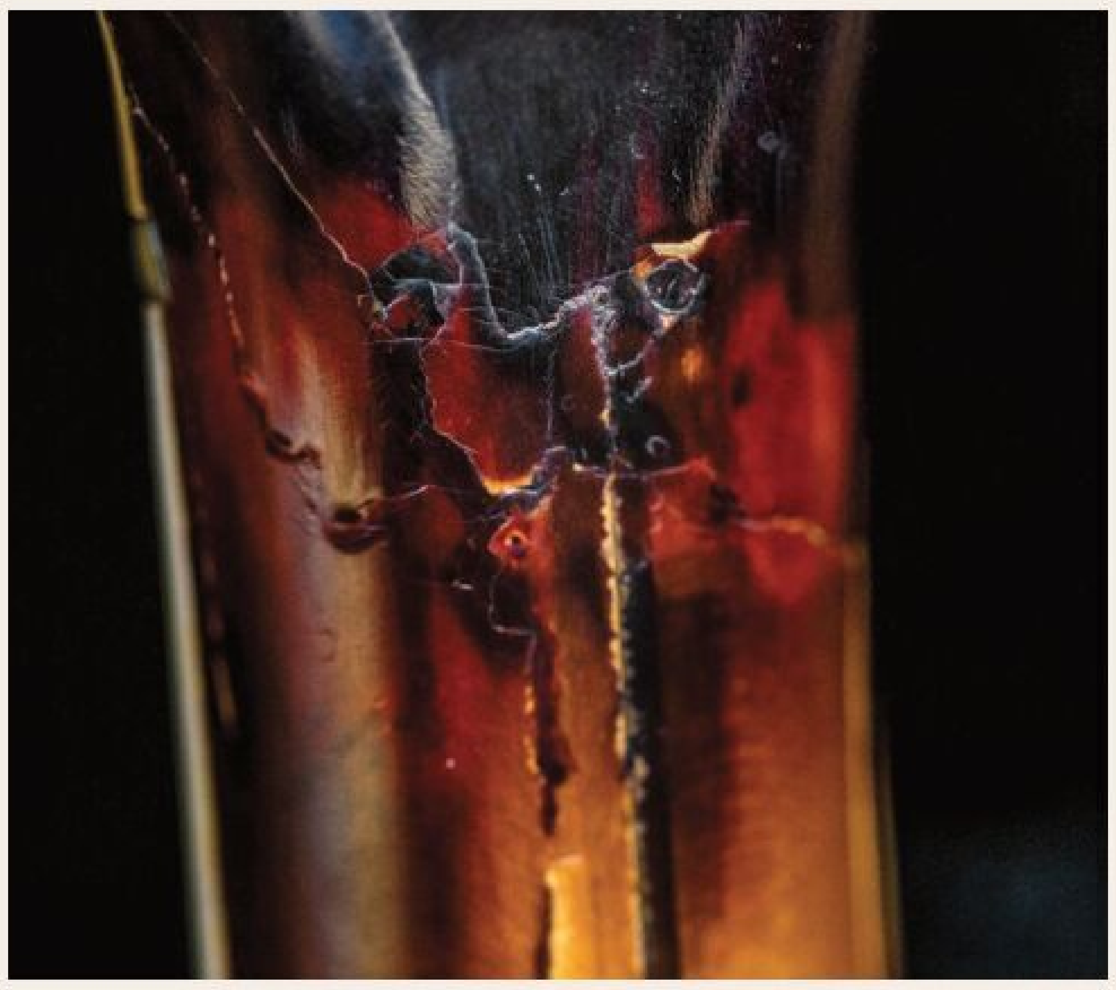
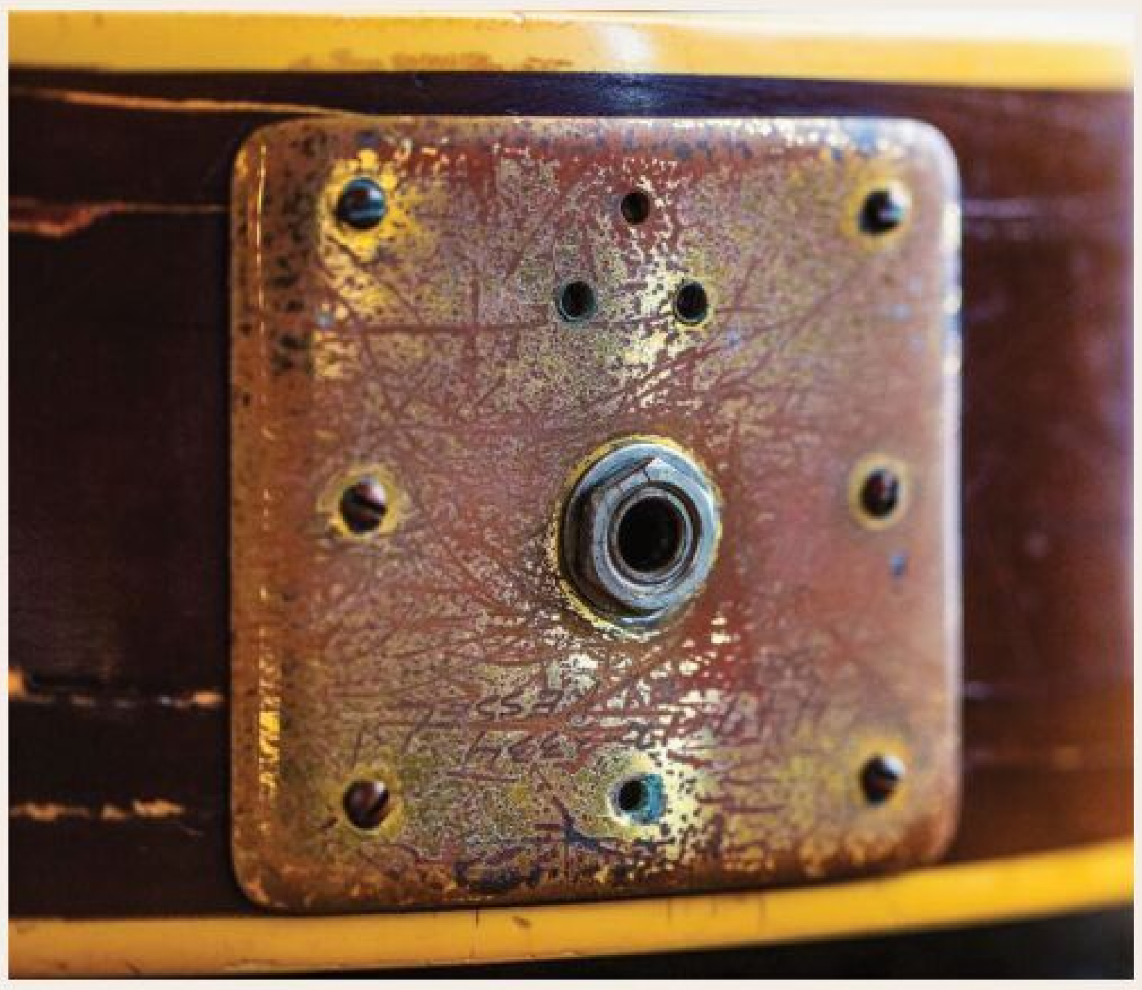
Interestingly, while tone may have been a consideration, Maurice Summerfield, Kessel's friend and biographer/collaborator, said ebony was chosen mainly because Barney believed it would better repel sweat, thus cutting down on finger grunge and making strings last longer.

On the Forman guitar, Barney's final tweak was moving the Volume and Tone controls closer to playing position (and plugging the original holes with an electronics cap), then replacing the stock knobs with "chicken head" radio knobs that allowed him to feel their setting without looking. Except for the holes from the P-90, the mods have the aesthetic of a Gibson factory build – seamless mating of fretboard, binding, and neck, along with clean installation of the pickup. It has even been suggested Kessel had it refinished several times, yet it has the appearance of stock.

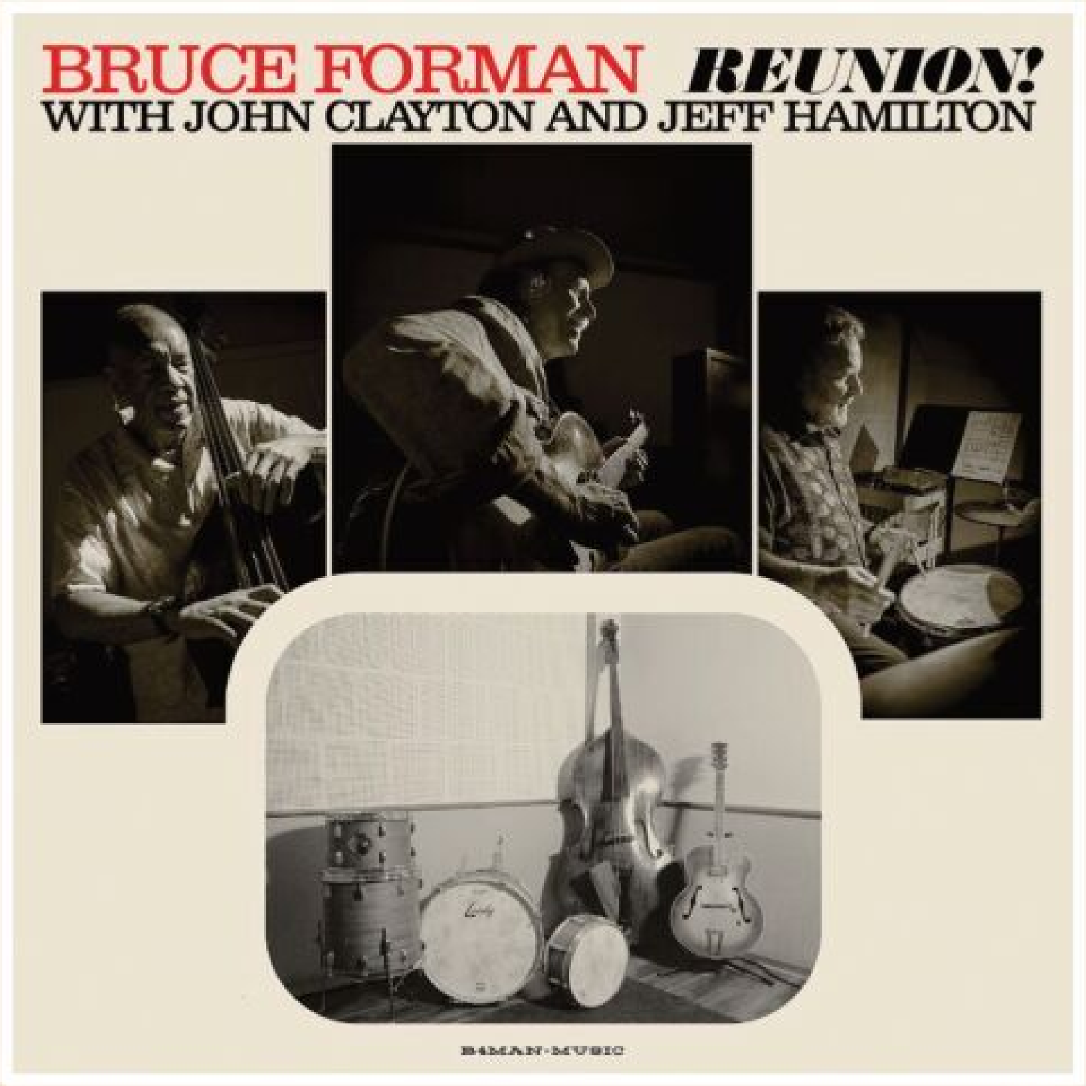
So, who was responsible for this wizardry? All we have are educated guesses. Norm Harris, of Norman's Rare Guitars, suggests there were only two people in those days who could have done the work so cleanly – Jack Willock and Milt Owen.

"Those two guys could do anything, and no one else back then was even close," said Harris. "Milt had worked for Gibson in Kalamazoo, so the Gibson look and feel was second nature to him. Willock was great, too, but if I had to bet money, I'd go with Milt. When Barney had his store (Barney Kessel's Music World) in Hollywood, Milt was his staff repair guy. All the studio guys took their stuff to him. Take him an L-5, and he could downsize it and make it look like it was a factory one-off."

Mercifully, no one will hazard a guess at the person behind the headstock or side/rim/jackplate repairs on the Forman 350. ***– Rusty Russell***

The still-rough repair from the headstock/neck separation, and the janky input jack.



While recording guitar for *Reunion!*, three mics were used – one each for the Gibson BR-3, a Henriksen Bud 10, and direct. "That way, we could really dial it in," said Bruce Forman. "I wanted it to sound right, ya' know?"

Kessel fans often wonder about, as there is very limited video of Barney actually playing it.

"Barney was impressed with the success of the Ibanez Joe Pass JP20 that I'd designed with Joe, so he agreed to have a prototype made to his basic requirements, and Ibanez produced a couple of samples. While his ES-350 was being re-fretted and cleaned in L.A., Barney played that first sample on a 1979 European tour. However, as before, he returned to his faithful ES-350."

The short-lived Ibanez experiment was far from Kessel's only foray into endorsement. In 1956, Kay introduced three "Kay-Kessel" archtop models – the Jazz Special, Artist, and Pro. Photos from pop sessions over the next few years show Barney holding these, though for movie dates where he was mostly playing rhythm in a big-band or orchestral setting, he almost always employed one of two '30s Gibson L-5s originally owned by early studio legend George M. Smith (Barney studied arranging and composition, even in his busiest professional years, and believed in strict tonal parameters for that rhythm playing). He is also said to have used one of the L-5s on Barbra Streisand's "On A Clear Day," as well as on some of the Sonny and Cher dates, four Elvis Presley movies, and many dates for Phil Spector.

There were also the Gibson Barney Kessel models that debuted in 1960 – the BK-C (custom) and BK-R (regular). Both sported 3"-deep laminate bodies, double Florentine cutaways, two humbucking pickups, and Tune-O-Matic bridges. They were produced until '72, and much has been written about Kessel's dislike of them, likely owed to the fraught relationship he had with Gibson over time. Barney had been well-compensated by Kay for lending his name to their B.K. models, whereas he felt bristled about Gibson using his name to sell guitars and not paying him

Kessel with Ray Brown: LaBudde Special Collections, University of Missouri – Kansas City UMKC University Libraries. Kessel in 1968: Gerald R. Fecht, courtesy The Museum of the San Fernando Valley.

enough. Those who were close to Kessel are certain that dissatisfaction was behind his painting over the Gibson name and logo on the ES-350's headstock.

"When I took the 350 to get it setup, the guitar hadn't really been played since Barney had a stroke in 1992," said Forman. "I had the grunge cleaned off the fingerboard, setup tweaked closer to what I'm used to, and so on. We thought about cleaning the headstock and removing the black overspray, but the repairman said it was some kind of spray paint, and he was afraid it would start coming off if he tried to clean it.

"I'm still amazed every time I sit down with this guitar," he added. "All the incredible stuff that came out of it, from Barney's hands. He challenged his *own* perceptions, and so do I. Barney told me once, 'I like you because you play the way I play, but you don't play like me.' I think he meant that I wasn't just trying to ape him, but we had similar sensibilities. What an *honor*.

"Barney wasn't a tech guy. He was all about the music. He thought of himself as a musician who just happened to play the guitar, and this one got him what he wanted – made it possible for him to get out what he was hearing.

"The record is about honoring what these guys did – all three, of course, but *especially* Barney. Think about it: Barney really legitimized the guitar-bass-drums trio. Chico Hamilton had a group, and there were a few others, but as far as the guitar taking the place of a piano in a trio, Barney put that on the map. Jim Hall solidified the format as a backing for a horn player, like with Sonny Rollins. But with the Poll Winners, Barney was the guy who proved guitar could cover that role. My view is from a jazz angle, but almost no one was doing it before they made it viable; a few years later you got Buddy Holly. Ten years later, you got Hendrix. I'd argue there's a connection.

"As for this guitar, I think about how close he must have been to it. The later repairs to the sides and headstock are really crude – they left it pretty rough after the break, and he played it like that, for *years*, constantly running over that rough spot. But I get it; it's like a dance partner you're really used to. If you change partners, you're gonna dance differently. Barney knew exactly how he wanted to dance." **VG**

Along with the ES-350, Bruce Forman also owns Barney Kessel's '40s Gibson BR-3. "The cabinet's coming apart, but it still sounds great," Forman said.

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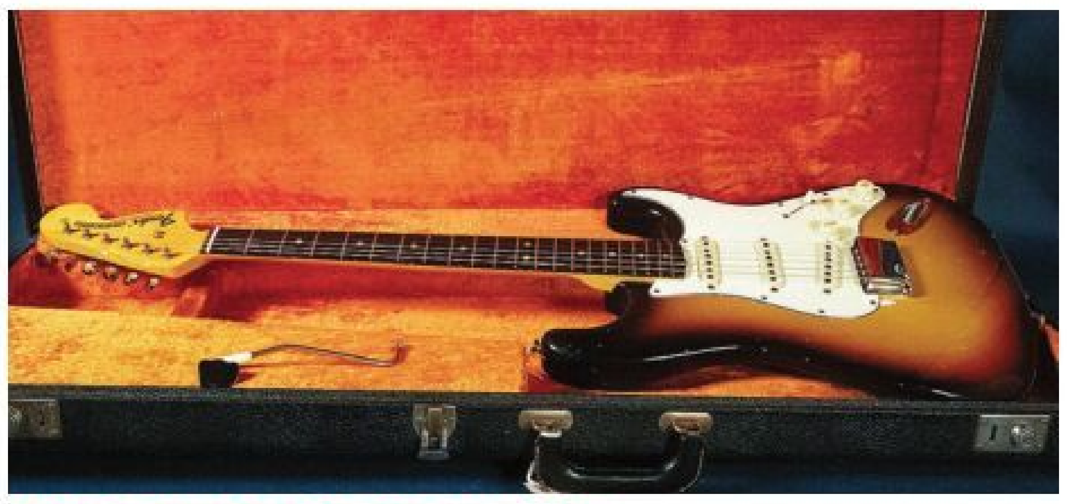

1970 Fender Stratocaster
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Upcoming Events

Denotes a new or updated listing.

Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, September 12, November 14, February 13, 202, May 8, 2022, at Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441 Mt. Dora FL. Hours 8-3 For more info contact Allen at info@lcmsm.com, (352)735-0025 or visit www. lcmsm.com

2022

JANUARY

2022 Winter Ohio Guitar Show, January 9, 2022, at the Makoy Center, 5462 Center St, Hillard, OH 43026. Hours 11:30am – 5pm. For more information call Marc at 740-797-3351 or visit www.ohioguitarshow.com

Amigo, SoCAL Guitar Show, January 22-23, OC Fair & Event Center, Costa Mesa, CA. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, January 28-30, 2022 at the Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. Public hours Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4. For more info contact Morty Beckman at (850) 962-4434, guitarexpo22@yahoo.com or visit www.guitarexpo.net (**See Advertisement on page69.**)

FEBRUARY

Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, February 27, 2022 Printscape Arena, 114 Southpointe Blvd., Canonsburg, PA. For more info contact Scott at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com. (**See Advertisement on page68.**)

MARCH

Cincinnati Guitar Show, Sunday, March 6 at the Sharonville Convention Center 11355 Chester Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45246 just off I-75 Sharon Rd exit. Hours 10am - 4pm. For more info contact Denny Melchers at 513-503-1072 or cincyguitarshow.com.

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday, March 6 at The Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, Il 60007. 9am to 3pm. For Booth Information contact Beverly at 847-931-0707 or email Bakesguitar@aol.com

Carolina Guitar Show – Asheville, March 12-13, 2022 at the WNC Ag Center I-26, Exit 40, 1301 Fanning Bridge Rd., Fletcher/Asheville, NC 28732. For more info, call Bee 3 Vintage at 828-298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com

The Lansing Music Instrument Swap, Sunday, March 20th at the Causeway Bay Convention Center, 6820 S Cedar St., Lansing, MI 48911 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

The Indiana Guitar Show, March 26-27, 2022 at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E Main St, Danville, Indiana. For more info visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com

Amigo Nashville Guitar Show, March 26-27, Williamson County Ag Expo Park, Franklin, TN. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com, Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

APRIL

NY Guitar Show, April 2-3 at the Freeport Recreation Center, 130 E Merrick Rd. Freeport, NY 11520. Hours 10am-5pm. Contact Rich Johnson at 516-435-8382 or rich@thefishingline.com. www.nyguitarexpo.com

Northeast Guitar Expo, April 3, 2022 at The Verve Hotel & Convention Center, 1360 Worcester St., Natick, MA. Hours 11-4. For more info call Peter Occhineri (860) 983-6774, email – NortheastGuitarExpo@gmail.com, website – www.NortheastGuitarExpo.com

The Kalamazoo Music Instrument Swap, Sunday April 24 at the Kalamazoo County Expo Center, 2900 Lake St., Kalamazoo, MI 49048 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

Dallas International Guitar Festival, April 29 through May 1, at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX, For more info visit www.guitarshow.com.

MAY

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, May 7-8, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com

Amigo Chicago Guitar Show, May 21-22, Odeum Sports & Expo Center, Villa Park, IL. For more Dave at (417) 850-4751, davelcrocker@gmail.com, Ruth at (817) 312-7659, ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Rob at (417) 869-3325 or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com

JUNE

Amigo SoCALGuitar Show, June 4-5, OC Fair & Event Center, Costa Mesa, CA. For more info Larry at (918) 288-2222, amigoshows@stringswest.com or visit www.amigoguitarshows.com.

SEPTEMBER

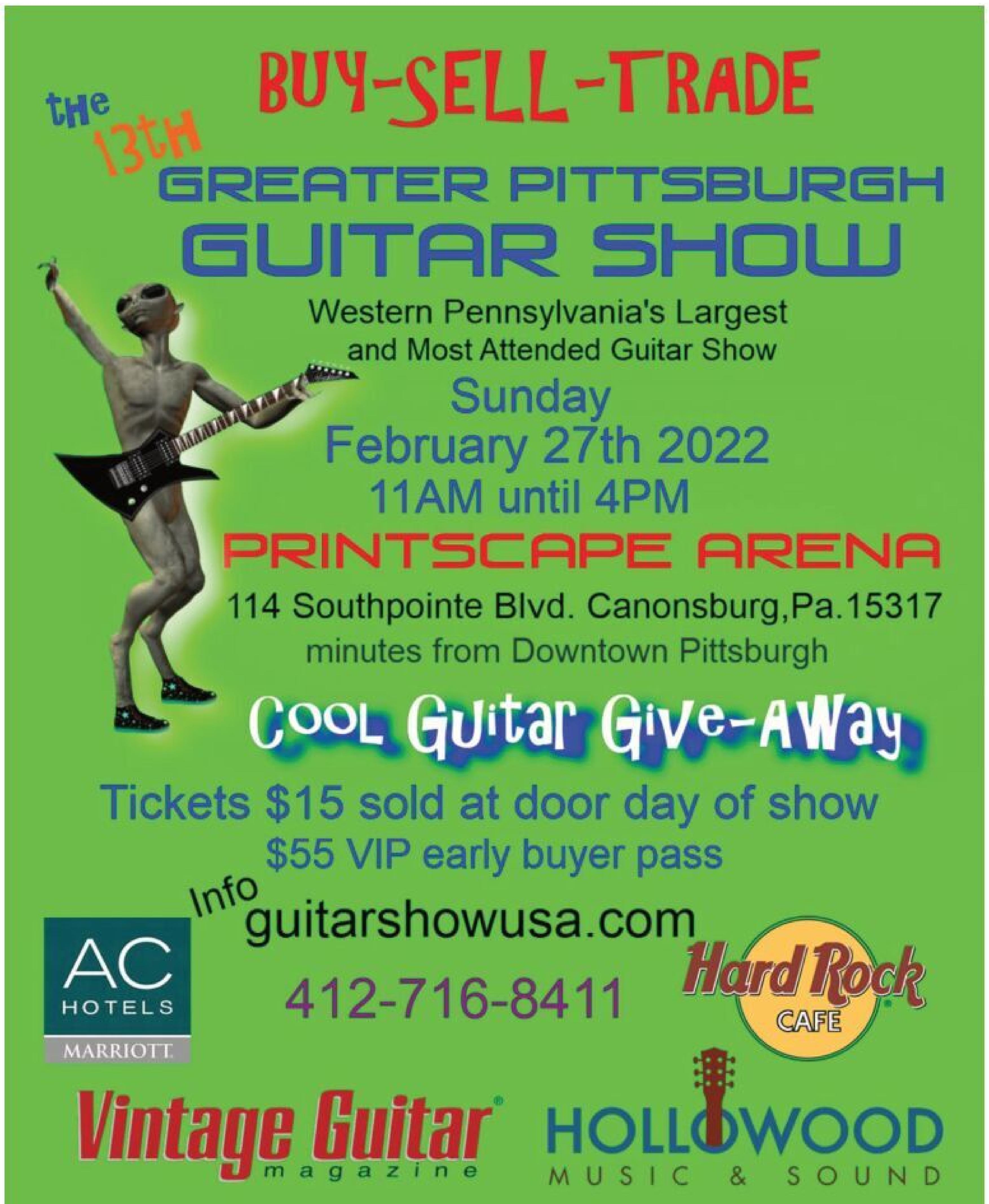
Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, September 17-18, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com

Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, September 25 at The Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. 9am to 3pm. For Booth Information contact Beverly at 947-931-0707 or email Bakesguitar@aol.com

OCTOBER

Guitarlington 2021, October 15-16 at the Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington TX. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com , Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222 larryb@stringswest.com, Dave Crocker (417) 850-4751 davelcrocker@gmail.com, Fax (817) 473-1089 www.texasguitarshows.com.

If you have information regarding upcoming guitar shows or events, visit http://www.vintageguitar.com/guitar-show-submission or e-mail james@vintageguitar.com. All submissions must be received by the 10th of each month, or they will appear in the next available issue. This listing is done as a service to our readers and we reserve final determination as to its contents.



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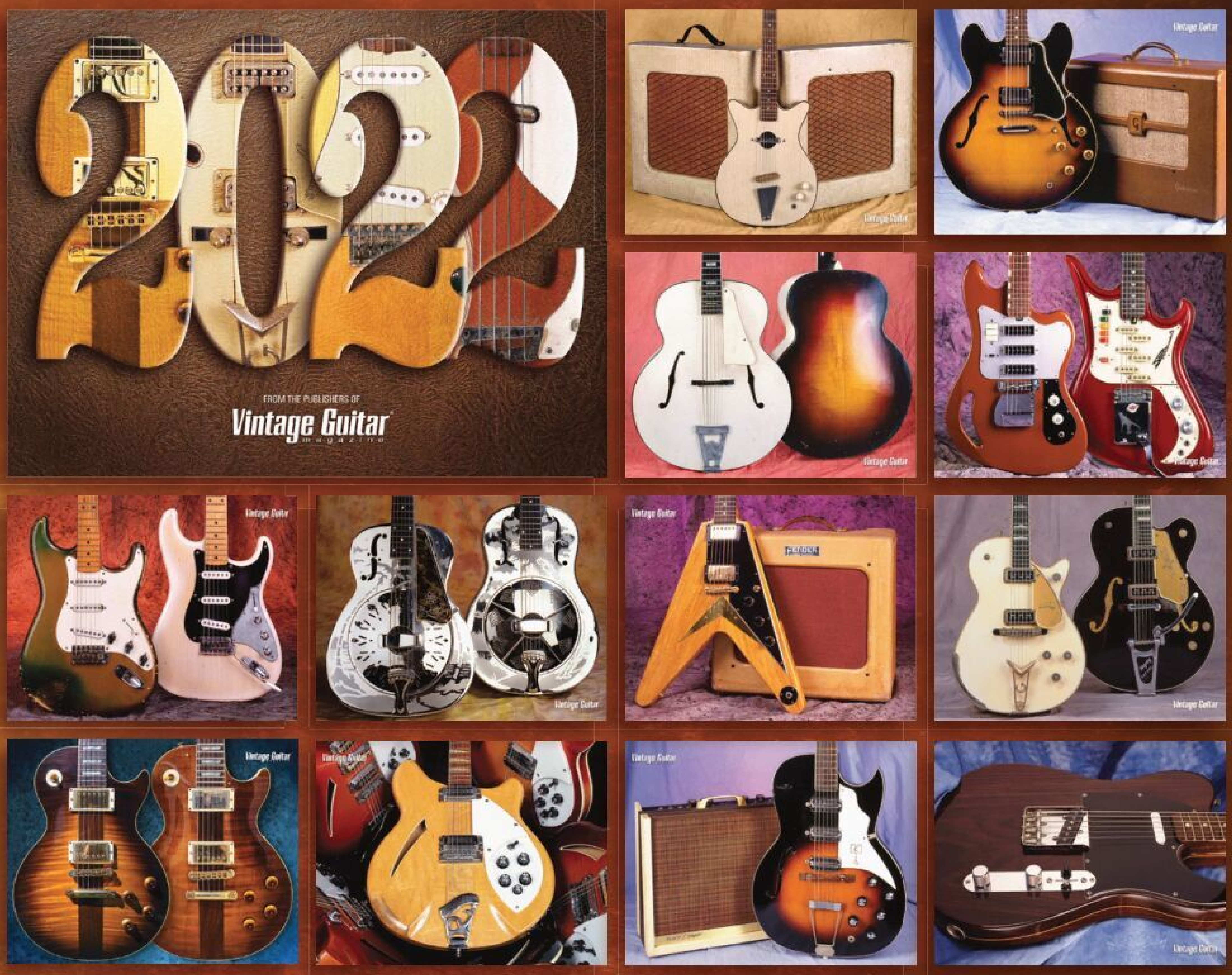

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Destroyer 45

SOUNDS OF KISSTORY

Following their *Alive!* breakout, Kiss hired producer to the superstars Bob Ezrin and cut what became their first platinum album, expanded here into a four CD/Blu-Ray box. The 1976 LP also launched the band's overtly commercial era, mixing hard rock, bubblegum, and ballads for the growing Kiss Army of teens and tweens.

Destroyer 45 opens with the iconic "Detroit Rock City," a firecracker of riffs, crunch, and harmonies. Also dig its kick-ass original demo. Ace Frehley delivers space-rock solos on "God of Thunder," but otherwise, the guitarist is largely absent from the album. Instead, the leads in "Sweet Pain" and "Flaming Youth" were secretly performed by Alice Cooper guitarist Dick Wagner.

Look for extensive demos and alternate takes on discs two and three, like a rehearsal "King of the Night Time World" and an acoustic-guitar version of Peter Criss' ballad, "Beth." A glaring caveat emerges on disc four, which is a May '76 concert from Paris. While a true Kiss soundboard tape would be revelatory, this is a substandard audience bootleg. Buyer *beware*.

Still, *Destroyer 45* is a nostalgic dive into Kisstory, capturing the band's evolution into a global entertainment behemoth. If that sounds like a blast, it's probably time to re-enlist. ***– Pete Prown***

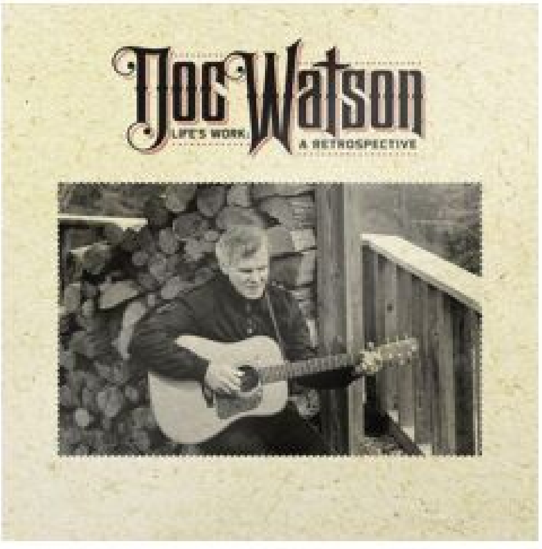
Deep Purple
Turning to Crime

As songwriting royalties wither in the streaming age, artists increasingly record covers, often songs influential to their musical development. The pandemic further helped Deep Purple find time to cut this album of high-volume stompers. As your ears will tell you, these legendary veterans – including vocalist Ian Gillan, guitarist Steve Morse, and bassist Roger Glover – are having a blast, with Bob Ezrin (Pink Floyd, Kiss) producing.

Morse shines on Fleetwood Mac's "Oh Well," snapping off its famous riff and adding lickety-split ascending runs. "Jenny Take a Ride!" is a sweaty rocker like the Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels blueprint. "Let the Good Times Roll" – a jump-blues standard by Louis Jordan & His Tympany Five – is a stylistic surprise from these hard-rock/metal pioneers.

Morse's piercing guitar, including tasty vibrato, elevates the Bob Seger System's "Lucifer." The head-spinning finale jam, "Caught in the Act," is a rousing medley encompassing "Going Down," "Green Onions," the Allman Brothers Band's "Hot 'Lanta," "Gimme Some Lovin'," and Jake Holmes/Led Zeppelin's immortal "Dazed and Confused." It's a scorcher.

Turning to Crime is not a major work – fun was clearly afoot – but Deep Purple's criminal record is expunged. ***– Bret Adams***



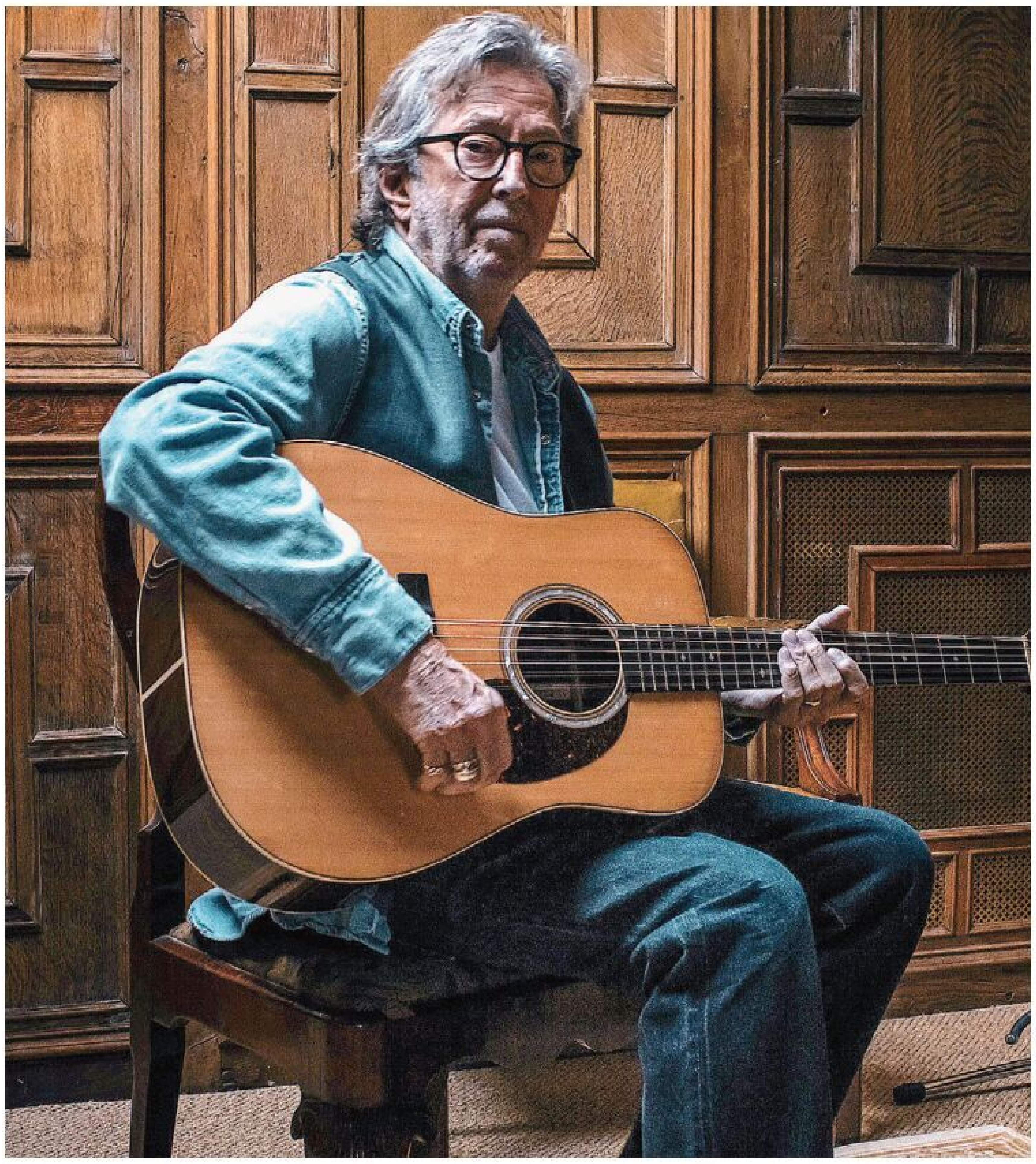
Doc Watson
Life's Work: A Retrospective

Doc Watson, the iconic guitar master from Deep Gap, North Carolina, emerged during the early-'60s folk revival. Nearly a decade after his passing, he's revered for flawless flatpicking, Merle Travis-style thumbpicking, and his warm vocals. This chronologically arranged four-disc collection begins with a 1941 recording, followed by Watson in the mid '50s, picking a Les Paul and singing with a rhythm section.

Whether playing Martin dreadnoughts or his beloved Gallagher (see our review of the Gallagher Doc Watson signature model in the January '22 issue), Watson's style remained fluid and rich. He drew from traditional tunes to songs by George Gershwin, Dan Fogelberg, and even the Moody Blues. *Life's Work* features him in a variety of settings. There are solo performances, and many with son and longtime collaborator, Merle. He's also heard with Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. With fellow guitar icon Chet Atkins, he amiably sings and picks the 1940 country ditty "Don't Monkey 'Round My Widder."

The set abounds with his mastery, particularly on the flatpicking showcases "Dill

Photo courtesy of Kiss.



WHERE'S ERIC?

By Dan Forte

Eric Clapton and London's Royal Albert Hall are virtually synonymous. In various contexts he has played the storied venue more than 200 times – first with the Yardbirds in 1964, but mainly as bandleader for his yearly stints, even racking up 24 nights in '91.

But in 2021, his shows were cancelled due to the global pandemic. So, he gathered a pared-down edition of his band at an estate in Sussex, where they played old favorites, familiar blues, and newer songs to an audience of one – Clapton's wife of 19 years, Melia McEnery. The set was recorded and filmed for a project now titled *The Lady In The Balcony*, a.k.a. *The Lockdown Sessions*.

I was prepared to not like this, mainly because recent releases were pretty sleepy affairs. And despite its multi-Grammy status, his *Unplugged* album from '92 is one of my least favorite in his catalog. So when this set began with "Golden Ring" sounding like a lullaby, I figured it would be all I could do to stay awake. But after Eric says, "This one's for Peter," comes a rendition of Peter Green's "Black Magic Woman." It's rather Fleetwood Mac "lite," but a commendable, sincere gesture. On the next nod to Green, "Man Of The World," the acoustic treatment nicely suits the more-spare elements of the original.

In the liner notes, producer Russ Titelman says, "We didn't try to make it sound like a rock-and-roll record," and that's certainly the case. Whereas Clapton's road band in recent years has included female background singers, two drummers, singer/keyboardist Paul Carrack, and guitarist Doyle Bramhall II, this spartan unit consisted only of bassist Nathan East, drummer Steve Gadd, and keyboardist Chris Stainton. The guitar hero, then not quite 75, plays acoustic six- and 12-strings on all but three tunes. He's obviously a capable acoustic guitarist, but had that been his focus when he hit the scene 50-plus years ago, he would not have had much of an impact on the guitar world. There were numerous acoustic specialists far better and more interesting – countrymen like John Renbourn and Davy Graham, or Americans Stefan Grossman and John Fahey.

But on electric, Clapton shook the world, changing the way blues and rock guitar were played as few had before or have since. That's undeniable. Most of the repertoire here, though, is surprisingly simple. Though such world-class musicians are capable of dazzling technique, the material calls for restraint and taste. Key is the emotional content. To that end, Clapton gives heartfelt vocals on "Bell Bottom Blues," from Derek & the Dominos, and "River Of Tears," off 1998's *Pilgrim*.

None of the blues covers ("Rock Me Baby," "Key To The Highway," "Long Distance Call") are definitive though "Going Down Slow" is given a new lease on life with descending altered chords.

I cringe every time I hear the acoustic version of "Layla" because it doesn't make sense; he took his greatest composition – something written and delivered in utter desperation – and turned it into a sing-song ditty. And when Titelman (acting as pitch man) says, "That version of 'Layla' is the best version that's ever been performed anywhere," it's utter B.S.

A Gibson Byrdland and an ES-335 are called into duty for the last three numbers, culled from Muddy Waters' and Eddie Taylor's repertoires. The world doesn't need another rendition of "Got My Mojo Working," but it's the most spirited song of the day.

Forty-five years ago, I did the first of seven interviews with Clapton, including the February '07 *VG* cover story with him and J.J. Cale and a '14 video interview in conjunction with his tribute to Cale (the latter can be viewed at whereseric.com). Somehow, being knowledgeable about an artist equates in some minds as championing him. That's not my job, but neither is it to rip into him, or any musician. Someone will feel the need to tell me, "Clapton is overrated." Probably true. But if they dismiss his guitar playing, I point them to the *Blues Breakers* album with John Mayall or *Fresh Cream* – which invariably they haven't heard.

With all artists, my interviews have been about music, not lifestyle – a strength of the publications I've worked for. But when friends found out I was covering Clapton's new album, some wondered if, given E.C.'s adversarial stance toward the lockdown and Covid vaccinations, I would interview him if the opportunity arose again.

Of course I would. I'm capable of separating the person from the art; I don't have to like one to appreciate the other. That didn't seem the case with recent articles in *Rolling Stone* and elsewhere. Clapton's sins dating back to '76 are fair game, but so is the fact that elder blues statesmen thought the world of him, he auctioned most of his guitar collection to finance a drug rehab center in Antigua, and he promoted a series of the largest (and most-varied) guitar festivals, dubbed Crossroads.

I do, however, wish he'd wear a goddamn mask.

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Eric Clapton: Dave Tree.

Sue Foley with "Pinky."

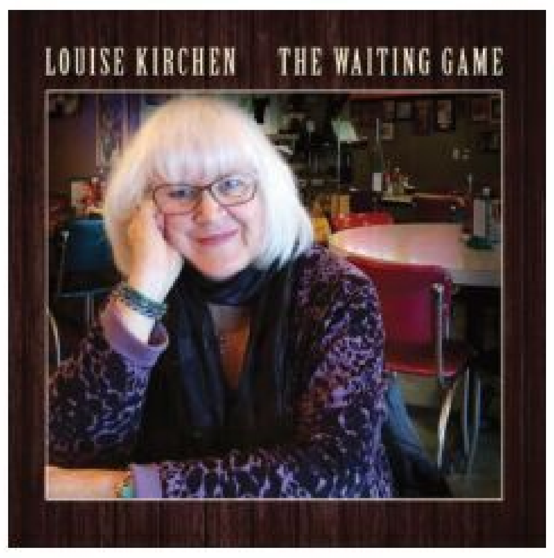
Pickle Rag" and his signature instrumental, "Doc's Guitar." Among the great thumb-picking moments is a live "Deep River Blues" with Merle. Watson is particularly moving on an exuberant 1990 jam on the instrumental "Salt Creek" with his two greatest flatpicking protégés, Norman Blake and Tony Rice. – ***Rich Kienzle***

Sue Foley
Pinky's Blues

Sue Foley named her paisley Telecaster reissue "Pinky," and her latest album celebrates the guitar she has played her whole career. Over the years, Foley moved from her native Canada to Austin, and has proven she can play the blues. This is a solid guitar-trio album, with Pinky front and center on every track and able backing from Chris "Whipper" Layton on drums and bassist Jon Penner; producer Mike Flanigin adds Hammond B3 on a couple tracks.

"Hurricane Girl" is a standout. Riding an Elmore James-style riff, Foley sings, "I'm a force of nature/I'm a hurricane girl" – classic Muddy Waters'-style blues bragging, complete with a wailing solo. "Dallas Man" features a scorcher of a riff while paying homage to blues guitar-slinger greats from DFW – from Blind Lemon Jefferson and T-Bone Walker to the Vaughan brothers and beyond. Foley also ably covers Frankie Lee Sims' "Boogie Real Low" and Gatemouth Brown's early jump-blues bopper "Okie Dokie Stomp," plus a stellar vocal turn on Angela Strehli's "Say It's Not So."

If you haven't followed Foley's career, now's the time to catch up. Modern blues don't get much better than this. – ***Michael Dregni***



Louise Kirchen
The Waiting Game

Fans who saw Louise sing harmony to husband Bill Kirchen on gigs or their charming "Cabin Fever Reliever" streams might have had an inkling. More-attentive listeners could have noticed her songwriting credits on albums by him and others. But few could have predicted such a strong debut of expertly crafted originals. Her unaffected vocals and spot-on melodies sit comfortably alongside some of the best musicians in Austin (or any town) as she delivers a solid country outing with eclectic overtones.

Rather than fill every hole with licks, this A-Team, including piano great Floyd Domino, serves the song and the singer. Marty Muse provides crying pedal-steel, while Rich Brotherton pulls double duty, producing while playing acoustic guitar and other stringed instruments. And Telemaster Kirchen is, as ever, unpredictable but tasteful.

"Big Hat, No Cattle" swings so perfectly it could've fit into Bob Wills' repertoire, while it wouldn't take too hard a nudge to land "Mud On My Boots" in rockabilly territory. "Just Friends, That's All" features mandolinist Paul Glasse, and "Honky Tonk Song" is just that – and a standard of the genre waiting to happen. I'm already itching for a follow-up. – ***Dan Forte***

Urge Overkill
Oui

Though Urge Overkill's *Saturation* was one of the great major-label debuts of the '90s, just as much ink was spilled on the group's rock and roll lifestyle, matching velour jackets, and cover of Neil Diamond's "Girl, You'll Be A Woman Soon."

With *Oui*, Nash Kato and King Roeser – UO's co-frontmen and sole constants since 1986 – issue their first album since 2012. It's a guitars-to-the-front collection that effortlessly incorporates the arena-rock swagger, alt-rock sensibilities, and power-pop hooks that briefly sent Urge Overkill to the "big leagues" three decades ago.

Kato/Roeser offer an "Urge-ified" take on George Michael's "Freedom" as the first single. While it's transformative in its interpretation, the 11 originals that follow are gems in the classic Urge style. "Follow My Shadow" is a standout that hangs with anything on *Saturation*, while tracks like "A Necessary Evil" explore all corners of Kato and Roeser's pedalboards. "Forgiven," meanwhile, melds Angus-like riffage and Gibbons-esque boogie, while "Won't Let Go" and "Litany" unironically deploy metallic chug and crunch to different ends. There's even a jangly garage rocker, "How Sweet The Light."

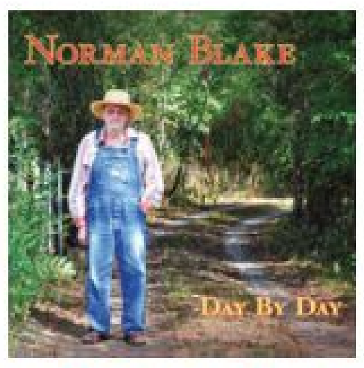
Oui is a slab of classic Urge that finds Kato's Ibanez Iceman and Roeser's Gibson SG once again being put to good use. – ***Dennis Pernu***

Sue Foley: Danny Clinch.

extra EXTRA

JOE BONAMASSA
Time Clocks

Joe's latest is raw, melodramatic, and hard-hitting. Embracing his rock influences, Bonamassa injects his bombastic ditties with silky Strats, muscular Les Pauls, and blues-based authority. On "The Heart That Never Waits," he shuffles with big-rock theatricality and fretboard excellence. On "Time Clocks," he swings for the fences with epic string strangling and vocals to match. It's Joe at his peak. *– OJ*



NORMAN BLAKE
Day by Day

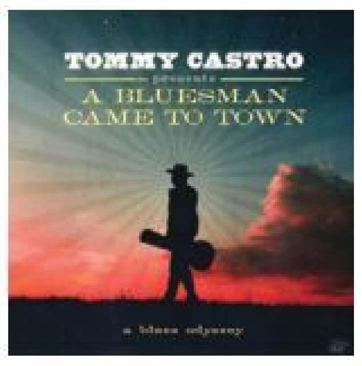
Long acclaimed as multi-instrumentalist and traditional music master, 83-year-old Blake offers a collection of largely antiquarian rural tunes, most featuring his weathered voice and full-bodied, cleanly picked guitar. "Time," his sole original, seamlessly coexists alongside ancient fare like "Montcalm and Wolfe," the five-string banjo instrumental "Old Joe's March," and the beloved Appalachian anthem "My Home's Across the Blue Ridge Mountains." *– RK*

OSCAR PETERSON QUARTET
A Time for Love – Live in Helsinki, 1987

Joe Pass was already a guitar icon, but when an artist of Oscar Peterson's stature called, the archtop hero happily turned sideman. The two jazz titans improvise joyously in "Sushi"; in "A Salute to Bach," the pair unpack a baroque theme with uproarious results. "How High the Moon" gives Pass room for dazzling fretboard exploration. 'Nuf said. *– PP*

MANCE LIPSCOMB
Navasota

The Texas blues man who peppered his repertoire with gospel and Tin Pan Alley wasn't recorded until age 65, when he was plucked from his farm and plopped onto folk festival stages and college campuses. In fine form on two discs, his relaxed vocals and intricate fingerpicking shine. His trademark speeding-up, monotonic bass covers songs from "Rock Me Mama" to "Motherless Children," with pocketknife slide. *– DF*



TOMMY CASTRO
A Bluesman Came to Town

Using a mongrel Jazzmaster, Castro plays low-simmer blues, never overplaying in the sexy title cut. "Somewhere" has slide growls and a fat Tulsa groove. Funk is on the menu for "Hustle," with its one-chord groove and *massive fuzz* solo; "Women, Drugs & Alcohol" is part Jimi Hendrix, part gritty roadhouse blues. Castro is a master of the slow-burn. *– PP*

JAKE SHIMABUKURO
Jake & Friends

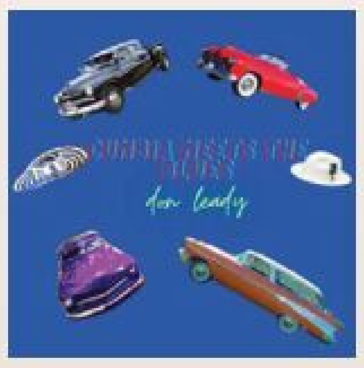
Ukulele stylist Shimabukuro's latest features affable tunes, colorful guests, and fantastic musicianship. Shimabukuro's playing is elegant and contemplative, while guests include Jack Johnson on "A Place In The Sun," Sonny Landreth on "Sonny Days Ahead," and Billy Strings on "Smokin' Strings." Willie Nelson and Michael McDonald also make appearances. Warren Haynes adds soulful fireworks to "On The Road To Freedom." *– OJ*

KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS
That's a Fact Jack!

The Southern band's latest features Greg Martin's guitar juicing earthy tunes that mix rock, country, and blues. "Watercolors in the Rain" is sparse yet arresting, while "Cup of Tea" has a breezy '60s feel. The jumping "Heart and Soul" is hard country. "Let's All Get Together and Fight" is a hilarious, laid-back, potential holiday standard about a family squabble at Christmas. *– BA*

DUG PINNICK
Joy Bomb

The King's X vocalist and bassist releases his fifth solo album, where crafty rockers mingle with poignant experiments. Pinnick is in the zone with lyrical meditations on the world playing both guitar and bass. Guitarists Phil X, Tommy Baldwin, Randy McStine, and Frank Falbo rip energetically, but Pinnick speaks volumes by his lonesome – highlights include "Key Changer," "Social Distancing," and "Slaves." *– OJ*



DON LEADY
Cumbia Meets The Blues

A founding member of the LeRoi Brothers and leader of the Tail Gators, Leady is one of the Austin roots scene's doyens. Playing guitars and accordion, he melds the namesake infectious Mexican rhythm with six-string lines ranging from blues to surf to tango. Known for side projects from Latin jazz to instrumental rock, this might be his hippest yet. *– DF*

LISA S. JOHNSON
Immortal Axes: Guitars That Rock

Johnson's latest large-format photo book covers guitars of 150 stars, from Eldon Shamblin to John 5, Jimi and Duane to Susanna Hoffs. It's big, impressive, and packed with 350 pics, many of which will leave guitarheads wishing for more since they're arty without being revelatory. Plus, they're not always the player's #1 axe. *– MD*

AVEY GROUWS BAND
Tell Tale Heart

Chris Avey's blistering guitar and Jeni Grouws' emotional vocals spearhead the Iowa quintet's second album – a comfortable blend of rock, blues, R&B, country, and alt. "Love Raining Down" rides a melodic guitar riff. "Bad, Bad Year" is molten, dark blues, while the ballad "Tell Tale Heart" simmers. The seven-minute "Mariana," a Floyd-like cosmic instrumental, includes astonishing guitar work. *– BA*

THE SYN
Flowerman: Rare Blooms from the Syn (1965-69)

Before founding Yes, Chris Squire and Peter Banks played in this English psychedelic band, crafting groovy singles like "Flowerman," "Grounded," and the Kinks-like sarcasm of "Created By Clive." Dig Banks' sick fuzztone on "14 Hour Technicolor Dream," with plenty of Rickenbacker jangle and Squire's thumpy bass. Interesting fact: one of the Syn's young fans was a London teenager named Phil Collins. *– PP*

Eric Krasno

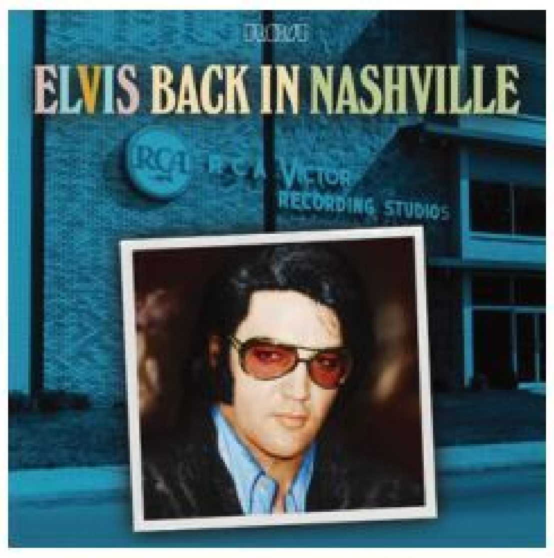
Eric Krasno
Always

On his fourth full-length solo record, two-time Grammy winner Krasno continues to explore the subdivisions of blues, soul, funk, and blaxploitation-film soundtracks. As the founder of Soulive and Lettuce, he also has producer credits for artists like Aaron Neville, Norah Jones, and John Mayer.

Co-produced by Otis McDonald, *Always* displays Krasno's growth as a vocalist/musician/songwriter/producer, as well as husband and father. It's a chill pastiche of smooth African-American music tropes for audiophile hipsters, but goes deeper as it delves into navigating human connections during a pandemic.

Krasno and McDonald play everything with a few exceptions. "Silence" begins on acoustic guitar and a groovy beat, then evolves to a sweet B.B. King-meets-Steely-Dan guitar solo, harmonized in thirds. There's the dreamy hypnotism of "So Cold," with its tremolo/fuzz-drenched arpeggiation, and the horn-like envelope filter solo played on the funky "Lost Myself." Krasno covers Bob Dylan's "The Man In Me" with its gorgeous soul guitar orchestrations and his take on the breathy John Mayer vocal affectation. That breathy singing thing could be an issue with some, but on the harmonically rich, "Alone Together," Krasno owns it.

Always is a festival of cool, retro-modern, cascading guitar sounds, smooth funkiness, and stank-ass backbeats. *– **Oscar Jordan***



Elvis Presley
Back in Nashville

Buoyed by a triumphant return to the Las Vegas stage and a string of recent hits, Elvis Presley returned to RCA's Nashville studios in the early '70s with new lead guitarist James Burton and rhythm guitarist Charlie Hodge. Regrettably, the original sound of the era's releases was diminished by syrupy orchestrations and added voices. The recent compilation *From Elvis in Nashville* stripped those overdubs from the 1970 material; this companion volume, covering '71, does likewise.

Presley, Burton, Hodge, and crack Nashville session players (including acoustic-guitar specialist Chip Young and bassist Norbert Putnam) tackled pop, folk, rock, gospel, and Christmas tunes. Minus the strings, the performances pack a far greater wallop. Young's rich, rolling acoustic accompaniment and solos stand out on three folk tunes: "Early Mornin' Rain," a rocking "(That's What You Get) For Lovin' Me," and an unedited/nine-minute "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right."

Burton is his masterful self, revealed in his fills and chicken-pickin' on two takes of "Fools Rush In," clearly inspired by the Rick Nelson hit version he played on. His flawless rhythm work and stabbing, screaming licks enhance Presley's vocals on "It's Only Love," "Help Me Make It Through the Night," and "We Can Make the Morning." *– **RK***

Bola Sete
Samba In Seattle

The uninitiated will wonder why they're just now hearing such a guitar genius, while aficionados bemoan the fact Bola Sete isn't a household name.

Previously unreleased, this triple-CD, subtitled *Live At The Penthouse (1966-1968)*, offers an in-depth portrait of the brilliant Brazilian guitarist at the height of his powers. The 40-page booklet includes interviews with widow Anne Sete, bandmate Lalo Schifrin, and Carlos Santana, as well as Bola champions George Winston and John Fahey.

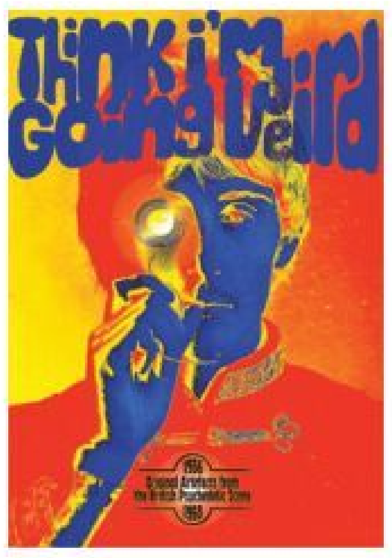
In spite of collaborations with pianist Vince Guaraldi and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, a legendary performance at 1966's Monterey Jazz Festival, and being sampled by hip-hop acts, Sete isn't as well-known as his talents merit. One reason may be that he straddled jazz, Latin, and classical genres, making him difficult to pigeonhole – but stylistic range was also his strength.

"Flamenco Fantasy" is expertly delivered, and the standard "Satin Doll" is transformed into a fiery samba, interpolating "Tea For Two." He does justice to "Recuerdos de la Alhambra," and none could interpret *Black Orpheus*'s soundtrack better.

Decades before cell phones captured live performances, we're grateful to KING-FM radio's Jim Wilke for recording these '60s shows for posterity – and that they're finally seeing the light of day. *– **DF***

Eric Krasno: Shervin Lainez.

Gov't Mule's Warren Haynes.



Various artists

Think I'm Going Weird: Original Artefacts from the British Psychedelic Scene 1966-68

Do you crave fuzzed-out guitars, trippy pop, and all things Carnaby Street? If so, this five-CD/book set is a magical mystery tour of British psychedelia.

You'll hear groovy singles from The Who and The Kinks, but also the obscure Simon Dupree & the Big Sound before they became '70s proggers Gentle Giant. One in a Million's 1967 "Fredereek Hernando" has slick licks from *14-year-old* Jimmy McCulloch, later of Paul McCartney & Wings. The legendary pre-ELO band The Move delivers snotty riffs on "Walk Upon the Water," thanks to guitar man Roy Wood.

The electrified baroque figures in Fairport Convention's "The Lobster" come from teenaged Richard Thompson, while the jangle of "A Woman of Distinction" is Caleb Quaye, later Elton John's guitarist. Dave Mason plucks sitar on Traffic's "Utterly Simple," while layers of acoustics and electrics build Force Four's "Sun Sing." For guitar heroics, The Yardbirds' 1966 raga-rock masterpiece "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago" remains unrivaled, thanks to dueling 22-year-olds you know as Jeff and Jimmy.

There are countless acid-pop bands here (over 120 tracks in all), but *Think I'm Going Weird* sets a high standard, and there's little filler. Relax and float downstream with this box of satisfying psychedelia. *– **PP***

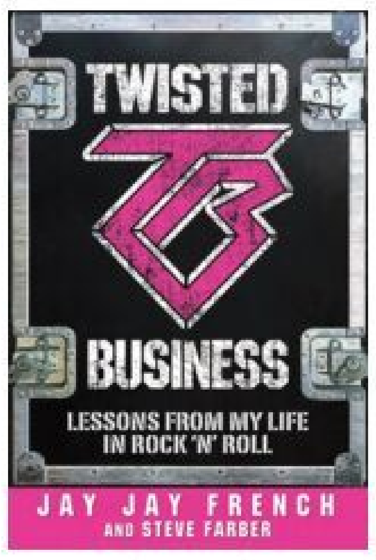
Gov't Mule

Heavy Load Blues

When a successful band of fine musicians is struck by the compulsion to revisit the muses of their youth by recording blues covers, it can go horribly wrong. Fortunately, Gov't Mule's first blues album is a mix of originals and covers that shows the band paying tribute while adding their own sauce and avoiding the "copycat" label.

Gems like Junior Wells' "Snatch It Back and Hold It" and Howlin' Wolf's "I Asked For Water (She Gave Me Gasoline)" receive the Gov't Mule Southern-rock/jam-band treatment. Warren Haynes' playing is visceral, funky, and deep, and the band grooves relentlessly with superior organ work on "I Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody's Home," originally recorded by Ann Peebles. Though this ditty saw performances prior to this recording, Haynes allows his Albert King spirit animal to emerge, and the juxtaposition is inspired.

Throughout the album, we're reminded that Haynes is an underrated, A-game guitarist who, for decades, has been impressing legends face-to-face. Original cuts like "Heavy Load" and "Black Horizon" display Haynes' bottleneck chops and the seasoned purity of his unfettered vocal style. The man can play. *– **OJ***



Jay Jay French and Steve Farber

Twisted Business: Lessons from My Life in Rock 'N Roll

Twisted Sister co-guitarist Jay Jay French is a resilient man; the see-saw of personal and professional triumphs along with troubles he has endured would've destroyed most people. His new autobiography is also a business-advice guide incorporating what he has learned in a (nearly) 50-year career.

French, who auditioned for Kiss precursor Wicked Lester, was a drug dealer/user as a teen, and relives several misadventures wrought by that reckless lifestyle. Realizing it was hindering his rock-star dream, he gave it up; later, Twisted Sister became staunchly anti-drugs/drinking. Still, it took a decade of dogged hard work to ink a record deal.

As a successful businessman, French managed Twisted Sister and Sevendust, and he oversees licensing deals including use of their megahit "We're Not Gonna Take It."

Many guitar-related stories are included, like how his cash offer of $135 to buy a Telecaster priced at $147.50 at the renowned Manny's in NYC was rudely rejected, but accepted at another store. These days, French rarely plays, but he still tends to a world-class collection of vintage guitars. A fascinating and blunt memoir. *– **BA*** **VG**

Gov't Mule: Jay Sanone.

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1985 Dobro dobjo, mint. 1930 Paramount guitar (martin made 36 only). Three 1930s-'40s Rickenbacker lap steels (bakelite). 1952 Martin D-18. 1986 Gibson TB-800 banjo. Jerry Reed #2 Plummer Guitar (Rare)! 701-740-3266

1981 Fender Stratocaster: $2,199. Very clean, 2 owner guitar-very late example of 70s era Fender in desirable Oly White faded to pale yellow. November 1981 sticker, as the serial number on the headstock decal reads as a 1979. It was originally turned lefty by original owner so a strap button hole on the bottom horn. 2nd owner turned things right. Original hard-shell case. Price drop only $1,800

Bluesboy Jag Cigar Box Guitars - over 4,000 sold since 2004. 1,2,3,4,6 strings, electric. dog bowl resonators, ukes, dulcimers, diddley bows. Makes a great gift! www.jagshouse.com

1997 Buck Owens Telecaster. CIJ. 9+ condition. One of 250. Limited Edition neck plate. Gold Jewelry is perfect. Not a scratch in the paint. You can see this thing from Space. Fender shaped HSC with 1 wonky clasp. $3500 incl. shipping CONUS from NY. IPLAYLOUD@aol.com for pics.

INSTRUMENTS WANTED

Buying high-end new/vintage electric and acoustic guitars in North Arkansas and Southern Missouri area; OK if needing repairs; email somestringsattached@live.com for a quick response and thanks.

Vintage Gibson, Martin, Guild, And National Resophonic acoustic & electric instruments wanted, 1920- 2000, in good + condition. Also wanted 1960s Ampeg Goldenglow Reverborocket combo amp, 25W, the lucite panel lights up. That's the one! contact Willis @ Delta Prince Music (AZ): deltaprince@cox.et

Seeking 1967-1970 Fender Esquire with maple fretboard. Cash, trade, or combo. michael.dregni@gmail.com

Vintage Gibson, Martin, Guild acoustic & electric guitars, & National resophonic instruments wanted in good + or better condition. 1920-2001, Also wanted: 1960s Ampeg Goldenglow Reverborocket combo amp, in good working order. Recone OK. The goldenglow series has a lucite faceplate that lights up, and copper top control panel. contact: Willis at Delta Prince Music deltaprince@cox.net.

AMPS FOR SALE

Vintage Kendrick Do Awl – Originally designed in 1994 especially for Billy F Gibbons. Only 25 ever made. Recently re-tubed and completely overhauled to like new condition and performance. 2X10 V-front tweed cabinet. 40 watt combo amp. Bitchin' Tone $3,500 Call Gerald 512 734 3064 or email gerald20@earthlink.net

1950s Gibson GA-50 combo amp., Very good condition, some tolex wear, amp was recently serviced. $1,900 + shipping (PayPal or CASH Only) Pics available. email: bluesfingers@earthlink.net

Transitional 1953/54 Fender Tweed Deluxe TV front combo amp. Original (distressed) lighter tweed with upgraded P12Q Vintage Jensen speaker. Completely overhauled, cap job, tubes, etc. Plays like it did in the 50's. $3K Call Gerald 512 734 3064 or email gerald20@earthlink.net

1982/83 Rivera Era Fender Super Champ Amp. Dead mint, all original condition. 18 watts - 1x10" speaker. 1989 Fender Champ12 Amp. Near mint all original condition. 12 watts - 1x12" speaker. solosaint@hotmail.com

Sundown Artist 112, $500 plus shipping. highsierranm@hotmail.com

1955 Fender Bassman 4x10" 5E6 circuit 2-input narrow-panel tweed. Same as Rory Gallagher's! I believe all-original except for handle. Owned by me since 1974, in storage since 1978. Condition at least VG+, $7500. Prefer not to ship; located New Haven CT area. Email for pics/info: markwillecho@yahoo.com

Instruments & Amplifiers
PARKWAY MUSIC
518-383-0300 WWW.PARKWAYMUSIC.COM

AMPS WANTED

Wanted 1960s Blue Diamond check tolex Ampeg B15 bass amp in very clean original condition. Send photos and description to RonCascisa@comcast.net or call (503) 777-0135

MISC FOR SALE

Two Views of the Blues with Charlie Apicella and Jon Herrington. This TrueFire course is like no other; deep dive into every facet of an F blues. 30+ video lessons, studio guitar duo performance and backing track plus exclusive three-episode video podcast. Play along with Jon and Charlie, two luminaries of the NYC jazz and blues scene! Download at www.IronCityJazz.com

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1962 Fender Jazzmaster Pickguard Assembly w/ pu's And Tremolo Unit w/Bridge. Everything included down to the original strap buttons. 304 6124. Tortoise. $1,995. shefshef@hotmail.com

Ivory Guitar Picks - Handmade Alaskan fossilized walrus ivory & mastodon ivory, great tone, beautiful, cool, lasts forever, $25. You won't play w/ plastic again. Guaranteed. Send check to: Mark Kostreba, 7661 Delridge, Anchorage, AK 99507-3015. mark-kostreba@gci.net (AK)

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www.RivingtonGuitars.com

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MISC WANTED

Supro Gold Foil Pickup Set, neck and bridge, Wanted! Full humbucker size, as on Supro Westbury circa 2017. Pickups alone, or with wiring harness / controls are both acceptable. allenhears@gmail.com

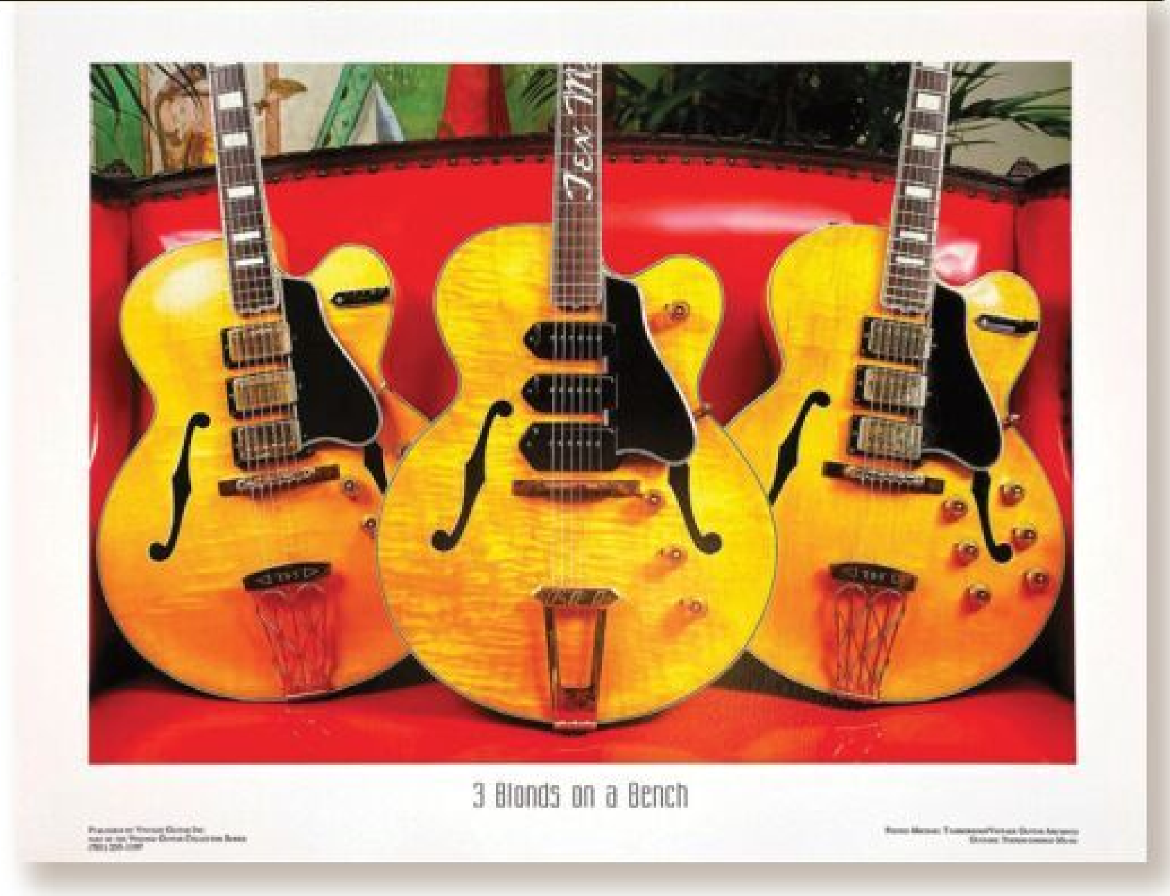
Looking for photos of Freddie King taken between 1960 - 1964, playing his early Gibson 335 Dot Neck. Needed to finalize authentication of that 335 I have owned for 30 years- not for sale. (Pictures of 345s & 355s not needed.) Please email me at BarneyRoach@gmail.com

Supro Gold Foil Pickup Set, neck and bridge. As on Supro Westbury circa 2017, WANTED! Pickups alone, or with wiring harness/controls are both acceptable. allenhears@gmail.com

Information wanted on Grinnell Brothers Music Houses based out of Detroit, MI. In particular Francis Allen Grinnell, grandson of the founders and his connections with Gibson in the 1920s and '30s. billysoutar@frontier.com

DEALERS

Worlds Largest Fender Strat & Tele Vintage Pre CBS Parts Check out our website. (218) 879-3796, ed@eddievegas.com (MN)



Art Print • *VG*'s "3 Blonds on a Bench" includes three Gibson ES-5s (1957, '51, and '59) reclined on a lavish red sofa. Printed in vibrant full color on heavy, 22" x 17", acid-free Lustro stock – quite suitable for framing! Order at Store.VintageGuitar.com Limited Quantity!

BUILDERS

Chatsworth Guitars now brings you: Dark Matter Guitar Slides - smooth as glass, but unbreakable! Creamy, vibrant tone, without unwanted string noise! Dark Matter is available at Reverb: https://reverb.com/shop/darkmatterguitarslides Chatsworth Guitars builds hand-crafted lap steels and roots music instruments. Available at: chatsworthguitars.com and McCabe's Guitar Shop, Santa Monica, CA.

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Alchemy Audio builds, repairs and modifies guitar effects pedals. Vintage and modern. Reasonable rates. Fast and friendly Midwestern service. (872) 395-FUZZ (3899). info@alchemy-audio.com

STOLEN INSTRUMENTS

Ca. 1958. Serial T 4042. Montgomery ward Airline Town and Country guitar by Valco. 3 pickup sunburst. Rosewood fretboard. Wood bridge. Corrosion on PUs. Missing Logo. Deluxe Klusons. Lost/stolen in UPS possession shipping to customer in Ca. donaldkuntze@gmail.com

VG APPROVED GEAR

GET UP, STAND UP
Guild's A-20 Marley

When it comes to famous Bobs in rock, Dylan is first to mind. But just behind him is another songwriting behemoth – Marley. As it turns out, the Jamaican icon wrote most of his reggae anthems not on his famous red Les Paul Special, but on an old Guild Madeira. That guitar is resurrected here as a value-priced tribute model.

The Guild Marley A-20 is a dreadnought with solid Sitka spruce top, mahogany back and sides, mahogany neck, and pau ferro fretboard with a 16" radius. Details are kept to a tasteful minimum, aside from a "Marley" inlay at the 12th fret and reproduced signature on the pickguard. A smooth satin finish, dual-action truss, scalloped bracing, and strap peg on the neck add to the package. Other amenities include Bob Marley tribute picks, a booklet with the story of Marley's original Guild, a chord chart for his anthem "Three Little Birds," and a gig bag made of recycled nylon. In keeping with an earth-friendly appeal, Guild partnered with the nonprofit One Tree Planted to plant a tree for every A-20 built.

Price: $399
www.guildguitars.com

In hand, the A-20 delivers above-average sonics in this price range, offering a surprising blast of volume and the critical bass dimension one expects from a dreadnought. It's a bright and bold tone, enough to inspire a song or new chord progression. The C-shaped neck is comfortable enough, though action on our tester was on the high side.

The under-$400 acoustic category is pretty competitive, but the A-20 delivers the Marley pedigree and surprisingly robust tone. If you need a good dread for writing and jamming, it's a solid-top contender. So, get up, stand up – and go strum one for yourself. ***– Pete Prown***

Price: $399
www.headrushfx.com

MANY RICHES
The HeadRush MX5

HeadRush's latest joint joins a line of products designed to ease the life of the performing guitarist. The MX5 Guitar Effects & Amp Modeling Processor takes the digital- and signal-processing features of the typical modern pedalboard and houses them in a *smaller* package.

A colorful, 4" high-resolution LCD touchscreen allows users to drag and drop 63 effects, 15 cabinet sims, and 46 amp tones into a signal path. Saving sounds is easy, and the unit is small enough for a gig bag. The expression pedal and three footswitches can engage a looper as well as classic and modern sounds. There's also a USB audio interface, FX loop, headphone output, and several impulse-response files.

The MX5 has 10 microphone emulations and 300 impulse responses, and users can even create entire pedalboards with up to nine effects, two amp models, and two cab models in a *single* preset. The unit's gapless preset switching with reverb and delay tail spill over to switch between clean and dirty tones without dropouts.

The variety of sounds and the functionality might seem overwhelming, but with a bit of patience, the user can master a plethora of tones from simple to sophisticated. Not the best for ADHD guitarists, but the simulations are impeccable. ***– Oscar Jordan***

TONAL TRANSCENDENCE

The Breedlove Pursuit Exotic S Concert Amber 12-String CE

In 1990, Steve Henderson and Larry Breedlove quit their day jobs at Taylor Guitars and moved to Oregon, where they set to work building their own. Through the decades, they made strides fusing new technology with performer-friendly builds, and introduced the guitar community to locally grown myrtle wood.

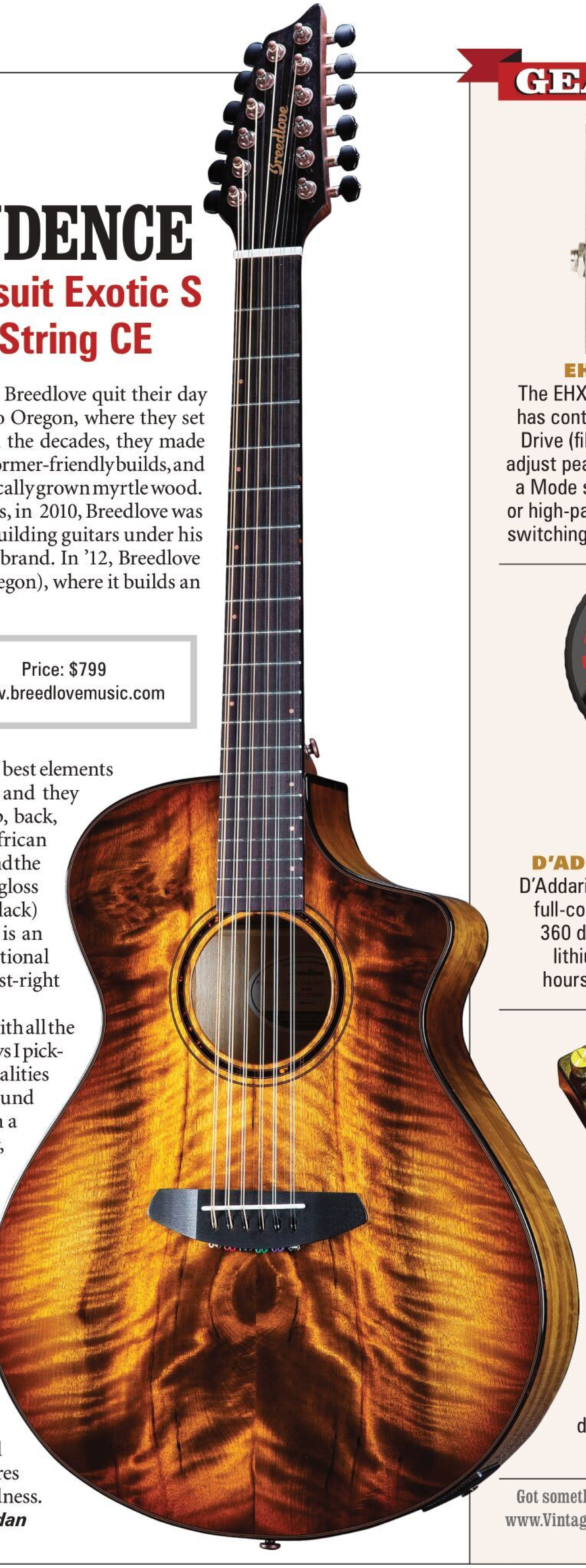
After experiencing financial setbacks, in 2010, Breedlove was sold to Tom Bedell, who was already building guitars under his own name and with the Great Divide brand. In '12, Breedlove moved to a larger facility (in Bend, Oregon), where it builds an average of 2,000 guitars per year.

Price: $799
www.breedlovemusic.com

The Breedlove Pursuit Exotic S Concert Amber 12-String CE is a striking example. Using timber salvaged and harvested under the eye of owner Tom Bedell, the company says myrtle combines the best elements of maple, mahogany, and rosewood, and they back that claim by using it for the top, back, and sides of the Pursuit Exotic. The African mahogany neck has a slimmer profile, and the whole thing gets a hand-rubbed semi-gloss finish. There's also an ovangkol (satin black) fretboard with 25.3" scale. The result is an eco-friendly 20-fret wonder with exceptional tone and playability thanks in part to just-right string spacing.

Acoustically, the guitar is dynamic, with all the earmarks. Plugged in, its Fishman Presys I pickup exudes the same rich-but-natural qualities of the best 12-string recordings. The sound is a hybrid of traditional 12-string with a standard body size and the smoother, processed sound of a full-sized model coming through studio monitors; it's a bright, resonant (but manicured) tone that can shine in any setting. Controls for Volume, Phase, and Contour, along with a Tuner give the user command with no fuss.

The Pursuit Exotic S Concert's body contour, feel, and weight make a good fit for stage performer or session cat. Given its ergonomic shape and size, there's a mental adjustment when switching from a standard instrument, but its sound and features make up for any temporary awkwardness. It's the modern real deal. – ***Oscar Jordan***



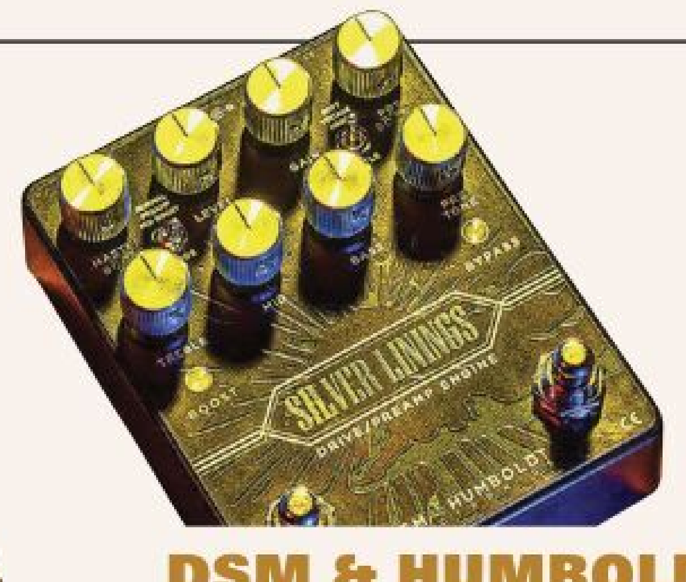
GEARIN' UP

EHX NANO Q-TRON

The EHX Nano Q-Tron envelope filter has controls for Volume (output) and Drive (filter-sweep sensitivity), Q to adjust peak bandwidth of the filter, and a Mode switch to select low-, band-, or high-pass. It also offers true-bypass switching and runs on a 9-volt battery.

D'ADDARIO NEXXUS 360

D'Addario's Nexxus 360 tuner has a full-color LED display that rotates 360 degrees and a rechargeable lithium battery that offers 24 hours of use between charges.



DSM & HUMBOLDT SILVER LININGS

DSM & Humboldt's Silver Linings is a dual-boost pedal with controls for Gain and Pre-Tone, three-band EQ, a style switch to select Soft, Vintage, or Hard gain and clipping presets, and a Mode switch to choose transparent drive, mid-boost, or for plugging directly into a power amp.

Got something new and cool? Let us know at www.VintageGuitar.com/Gearin-Up-Submission

VG APPROVED GEAR

TUBE SAVIOR

ValveTrain's PowerTrain Studio 20

We've all watched the guitar amp deconstruct before our eyes, as pedals, preamps, and power amps all shrink – and migrate to the pedalboard. The builders at ValveTrain know this, and have developed a way to deploy your favorite stompboxes and modeling gear, yet retain that essential tube tone. Enter the PowerTrain Studio 20 and Studio 50 "powered monitors."

As good as modeling gear is these days, you still can't accurately reproduce the sound of a tube amp pumping air through a speaker. There are no real features on the PowerTrain other than turning it on and letting its tubes warm up; your only job is to plug in a modeling amp or most any multi-effects unit. From there, the monitor sends signal through an analog path starting with a 12AX7 preamp tube, two matched 6V6 power tubes, solid-state rectifier, and an Eminence Copperhead 10" speaker.

Tested with a multi-effects modeler and a Boss Katana amp, the PowerTrain Studio 20 moved a lot of air as the digital preamp and effects became dipped in pure analog goodness, revealing an immediate sonic improvement that was *stark*. Furthermore, the PowerTrain produces a very loud 20 watts, enough to play a small gig or jam at home. One can assume the 1x12-loaded Studio 50 would shake, rattle, and roll your walls even more.

Even the most ardent digital defender will have to admit the Studio 20 is one sweet-sounding monitor. And while it's as pricey as many full-on, hand-wired tube amps, if you want the special sauce to make your modeler sound better, it's a great place to start. ***– Pete Prown***

Price: $1,199 PowerTrain 20/$1,499 PowerTrain 50
www.valvetrainamps.com

Price: $249
www.coppersoundpedals.com

STRAT-JACK BOOST

The CopperSound Strategy

CopperSound pedals started in the winter of 2014 as a group of friends in Massachusetts who wanted to build pedals for themselves. Soon, though, people outside their circle wanted one and orders started rolling in surprisingly fast. Today, their catalog includes a dozen options, and the Strategy preamp/clean boost has become one of the most popular.

The Strategy offers a very high boost of 30 db through its high-end op-amp. In addition to the Volume knob that controls boost, there's also a Tone to tame or emphasize treble response. The pedal goes from mild boost to all-out sonic assault while maintaining a remarkably flat frequency curve. From 1 to 5 on the Volume knob, single notes and chords sound "bigger." But the party starts with Volume just past 5 and beyond, as tone goes from mild distortion to metal. The Tone control is effective at reigning in excess treble at higher Volume settings.

Visually, Strat lovers will find the Strategy especially attractive; its knobs, faceplate, input jack, and even the color are more stolen than borrowed from the iconic instrument. But, because each is made by hand, the finish, knobs, and hardware can be customized if those stylings aren't your thing.

With its smooth boost and flat frequency response, CopperSound's Strategy could be your "always on" pedal. ***– Bob Dragich***

NYLON DREAMS

The Godin ACS SA

Too often, the notion of plugging in a thin-body guitar and getting a reasonably natural acoustic/electric tone is more dream than reality. With decades of experience, Godin is taking on that challenge with its ACS SA, a chambered nylon-string that aims to offer improved sonics, easier playability, and access for guitar synthesizers.

One factor that distinguishes the ACS SA from Godin's popular Multiac series is a narrower nut, catering to standard acoustic and electric players. With a width of 1.9" (compared to the 2" of some Multiacs), the friendly ACS neck is "medium-wide." If you need something narrower, check out an ACS Slim.

The ACS SA has a 25.5" neck, chambered maple body, and a thicker cedar top that reduces feedback at high volumes. The mahogany flat-D-profile neck has a fretboard made of Richlite, a dense, natural ebony alternative. A contoured neck heel, generous cutaway, and bolt-on joint complete the feeling of rock-solid construction.

Things get fun in the electronics department, with a standard 1/4" jack for output to amps and preamps, and a 13-pin-jack to access Roland-type guitar synthesizers. Inside, an LR Baggs transducer system delivers sweet nylon-string tone and effortlessly dovetails with the synthesizer of your choice.

Price: $1,499
www.godinguitars.com

Tested with a venerable Roland GR-20 synth, the ACS SA seamlessly wove together nylon and synthesizer colors, thanks to surface sliders perfectly sited on the upper bout. You get separate Volume sliders for the acoustic/electric and synthesizer signals, plus Treble, Middle, and Bass. Two buttons allow the guitarist to step through synth presets on the fly.

Tested in live-band rehearsals and at a recording desk, the ACS SA was impressive. Its live sound yielded warm, high-fidelity nylon tones without piezo quack or feedback, and handled heavy effects like reverb and delay like a champ. Plugging directly into a digital interface also delivered excellent timbres.

If the ACS SA sounds like what the doctor ordered, you should spend a few minutes researching Godin ACS and Multiac models to understand their differences. While they use the same general body shape, some have wider or narrower nuts, thinner or thicker tops, and other key variables.

It's easy to appreciate the Godin ACS SA. With a reasonable mid-zone price, this six-string is pretty much a classical gas. – ***Pete Prown***

GEARIN' UP

FENDER DUAL MARINE LAYER REVERB

Fender's Dual Marine Layer Reverb has two footswitchable settings, three reverb algorithms, Sustain switch, and LED-backlit knobs. Its chassis is anodized aluminum.

PEAVEY DELTA WOODS CLASSICAL

Peavey has added four classical-guitar models to its Delta Woods line, which use spruce tops and sides/backs made from mahogany or linden (basswood). Their okume necks have a C shape and composite fretboard. All but the 3/4 model have bodies measuring 4.5" deep, 25.5" scale, and 2" nut.

MOJO HAND SERICON OVERDRIVE

The Mojo Hand FX Sericon overdrive has Drive, Gain and Blaze controls for manipulating gain through its two op-amp stages, low-pass filter, post-Gain controls for Treble and Level, and silent-touch/true-bypass switching.

VG APPROVED GEAR

PROFESSIONAL FINESSE

The Orangewood Berkeley Live

Orangewood. Why not Ironwood or Peachwood? What does the brand name matter compared to the actual guitar? The simple answer is "A lot."

The Berkeley is part of Orangewood's Topanga all-solid-wood series. It has a dreadnought body, pau ferro back and sides, scalloped braces, mahogany neck, ebony fretboard and bridge, 44-millimeter Tusq nut, and a torrified Sitka spruce top. Orangewood offers two versions, one with an LR Baggs Anthem pickup. While the guitar is made in China, final setup happens in California. Our review sample came with Ernie Ball Earthwood phosphor bronze medium-light strings.

Price: $1,195
www.orangewoodguitars.ca

The Orangewood Berkeley Live is set apart from other guitars with similar specifications with its overall build quality and sound. Careful examination revealed no finish flaws – even the kerfing inside was precisely cut. The neck has what Orangewood calls a C shape; it's not as thick as many vintage-style necks, and actually closer to an electric guitar. Intonation was perfect.

The LR Baggs makes the Berkeley Live a fine gigging axe. Plugged into an Ultrasound amp, the tonality was a close match to the Berkeley's excellent pure acoustic sound.

One word that might keep popping into your brain while playing the Berkeley is "finesse," because it offers the feel, sound, and functionality of a professional instrument. The action on our tester needed no adjustment, sustain was even and excellent up the neck, and there were zero dead spots or wolf tones. Overall sound had a cohesion and harmonic complexity that only comes from a well-designed, all-wood instrument.

If you're looking for an affordable professional gigging machine, Orangewood's Berkeley Live should be on your short list. – ***Steven Stone***

Price: $599.99
www.ibanez.com

JAZZED UP

The Ibanez AF95

In 2021, Ibanez re-tooled its hollowbody line to devise big surprises like the Japanese-made AF95, a full-bodied archtop with a traditional vibe thanks to flatwound strings and vintage looks. Let's grab a Gmaj7+13 chord and check one out.

The AF95's back and sides are made from linden, with a spruce top and three-piece neck of maple and nyotah, all with a poly finish. Its ebony fretboard with arcylic block inlays and 20 medium frets has a great feel; strings sit on a walnut bridge and wood-covered VT14 tailpiece. Look for Ibanez speed-grip knobs.

Plugged in, the AF95 impresses quickly. Its neck is fast, yet retains a full C shape, combining an old-school carve with modern comfort and speed – *outstanding* for a $600 hollowbody. The archtop has a lively tone, with plenty of personality through the amp, though it's typically quiet unplugged. For pickups, Ibanez went with PAF-like Super 58 humbuckers. The tones are perfectly fat, especially at the neck with the Tone rolled back just a hair. Combined with the .011-gauge flatwounds, the AF95 sounds jazz-perfect.

If you're interested in the warm, sexy tones of hollowbodies but don't want to drop big coin, this box could figure prominently – it's serious competition to other hollowbodies, with a neck and fretboard comparable to archtops that cost significantly more. ***– Pete Prown***

GOLDEN CHILD

The Collings CJ-45 T

Every now and then, you pick up a guitar and realize you're holding magic in your hands. Welcome to the Collings CJ-45 T.

The inspiration is obvious in a slope-shouldered design that harkens to the J-45, Gibson's wartime answer to Martin's big pre-war dreadnoughts. Like that classic, Collings' guitar is a no-frills instrument that's all about playability and tone.

In Collings' world, the "T" stands for "Traditional" and indicates select woods, era-correct scalloped X-bracing, and extra-thin nitrocellulose finish. With the CJ-45 T, players have a choice of Sitka or Eastern Red spruce top with scalloped spruce bracing along with mahogany sides and back.

Price: $6,400
www.collingsguitars.com

Like many a Collings, the CJ-45 T is oh-so light. The body is downright graceful while the Honduran-mahogany neck is hefty and substantial but still finely crafted, with a mortise-and-tenon hybrid join. The 24.875" scale and full-C shape are robust and no-nonsense, like the banner-head Gibson it's based on. Waverly nickel tuners with ivoroid buttons and simple ivoroid body binding are typical appointments, and everything about the guitar and its finish is *beautiful*; the deep, rich sunburst is like a spectacular summer sunset, topped by a faux-tortoiseshell pickguard.

But it's when you get your hands on it that you realize how stunning the CJ-45 T truly is, because this guitar is all about the *sound*. Play it soft and it whispers. Play it hard, it booms. The responsiveness is lovely and the tone is exceptionally dry, warm, and woody, with crystalline highs and a robust, deep bass. It's an impressive tonal range.

With the CJ-45 T, Collings is not simply copying a classic. Instead, it's using history as inspiration and proving we are living in another golden age of lutherie. ***– Michael Dregni***

Price: $299
www.robertkeeley.com

TONE WEAVER

The Keeley Electronics Loomer

As effects pedals proliferate, so do multifunction boxes. Case in point: Keeley Electronics' Loomer, combining three reverbs with a raging fuzz unit, each side triggered by a separate footswitch.

The Loomer's reverb modes are activated by a microswitch. Focus mode summons a lush reverb accentuated by secondary delay. The switch's center setting, Reverse, produces a reverb that increases in volume with a swelling delay. Reverb saturation is controlled by a Blend knob, and increasing it here generates a Hendrixian reverse guitar sound. Also evident in this mode is an envelope-controlled vibrato activated by hard strums, giving the illusion of multiple guitars playing simultaneously. Finally, Hall reverb mode generates an ambient wash combined with an octaver, for a shimmering tone. Controlling pitch and modulation in all modes, the Depth pot can also be triggered by an external expression pedal, while Decay and Warmth controls add further tone shapes.

The other half of the Loomer offers fuzz tones ranging from a hard overdrive to end-of-the-world distortion. Three tone-shaping options include Flat, which provides a flat EQ setting; Full, for more midrange and bass; and Scoop, a midrange cut with greater treble and bass.

Naturally, the real fun happens when the intuitive controls are used to combine reverb and fuzz effects, resulting in sounds ranging from subtle to highly experimental. ***– Tom Guerra*** **VG**

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Visit the Dream Lab to build your dream Belltone®
Customization … made affordable … made in the USA
www.belltoneguitars.com

"Photographer Johnson (*108 Rock Star Guitars*) delivers another eye-popping coffee-table tome that presents the instruments of musicians as diverse as B.B. King, Kurt Cobain, St. Vincent, the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Keith Richards, Dave Grohl, Nancy Wilson, Tom Petty and many more. Johnson's passion for these artists and their instruments veers into the abstract, yet possesses a sensual and ethereal aura, illustrating the intimate wear of each guitar."

–Music Connection

PHIL LESH 1974 Alembic Bass "Osiris" aka "Mission Control"

IMMORTAL AXES

AVAILABLE NOW ON AMAZON AND ALL YOUR FAVORITE BOOKSTORES

TODD RUNDGREN Italia Modulo Type 3

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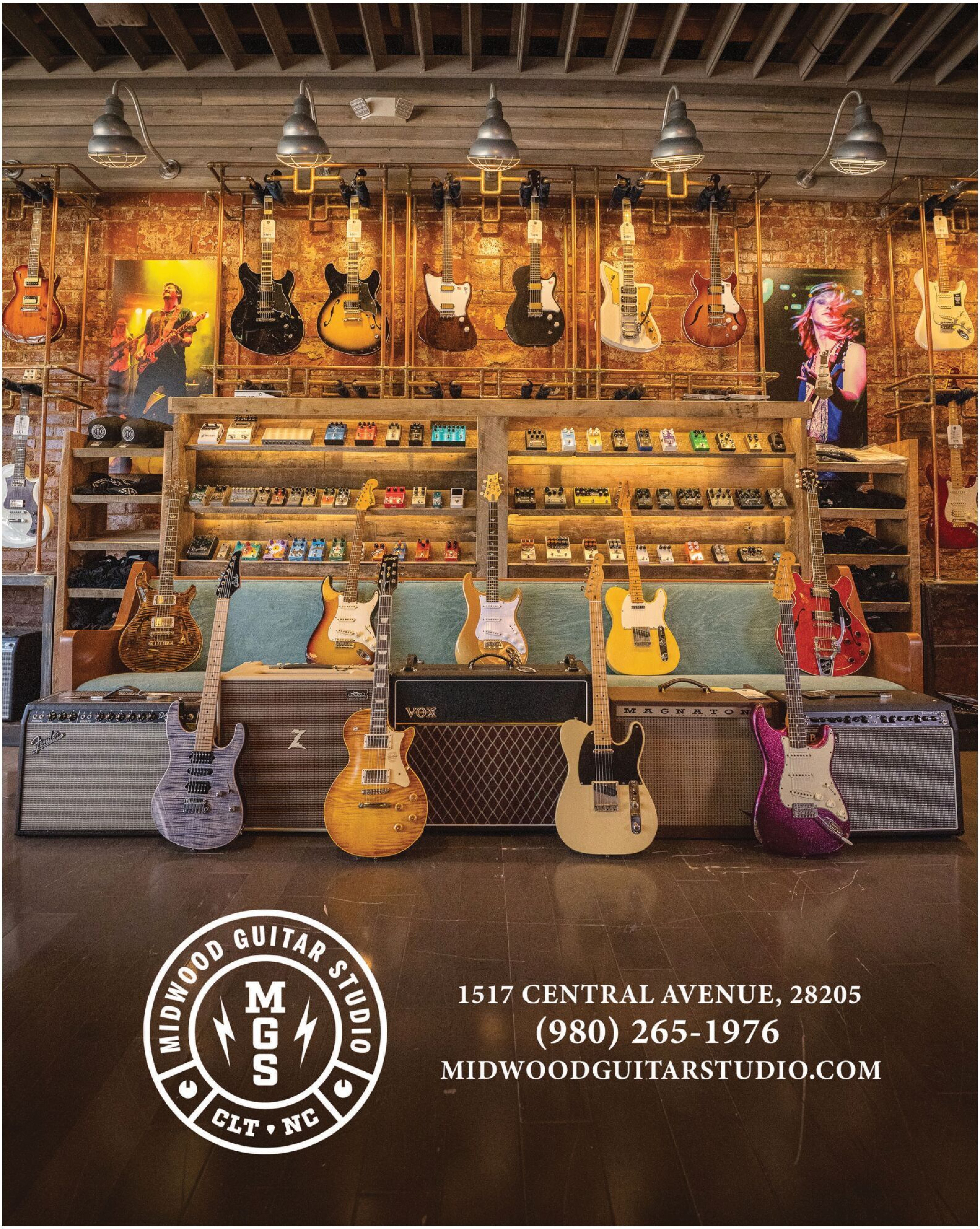
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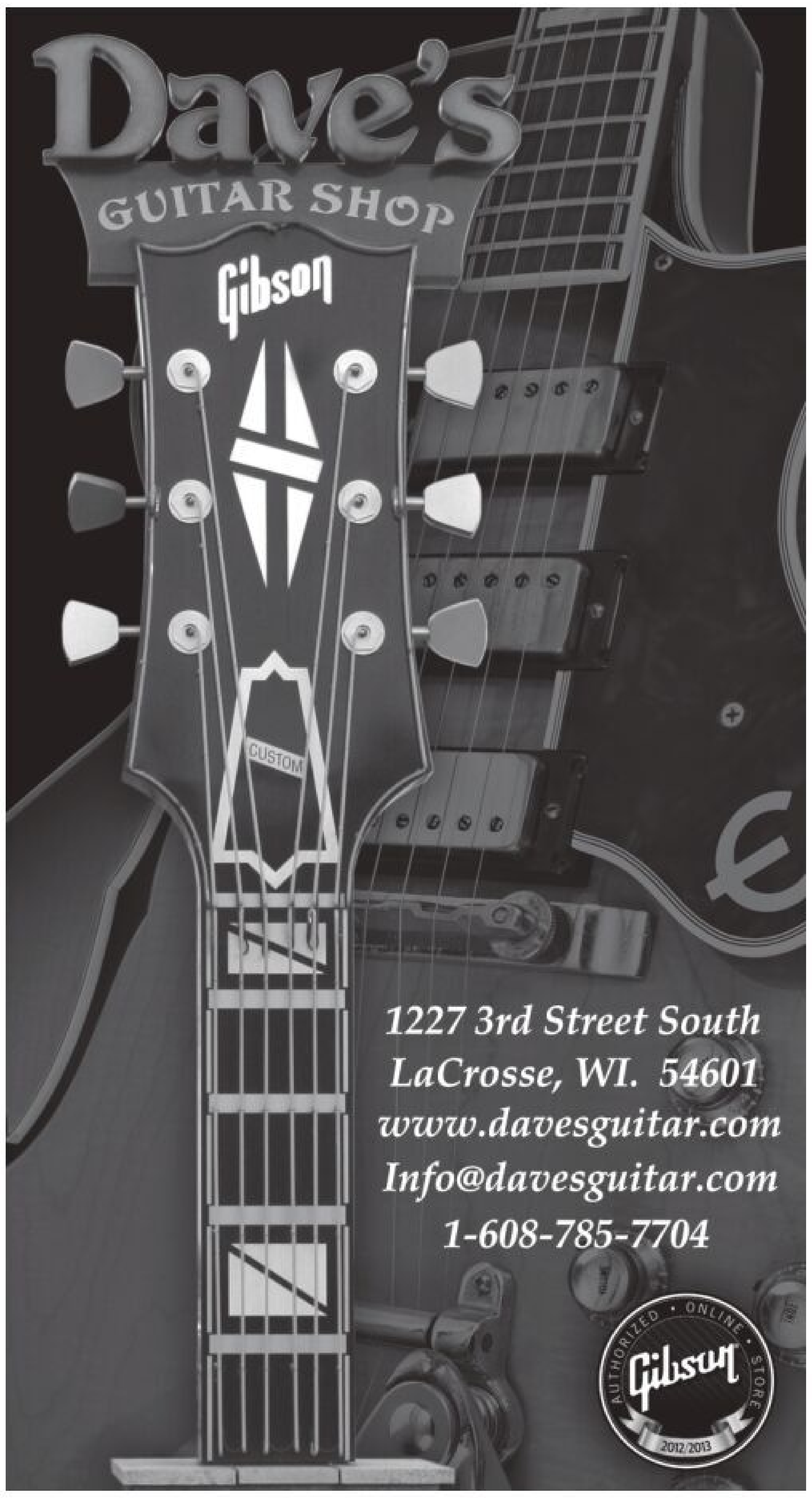

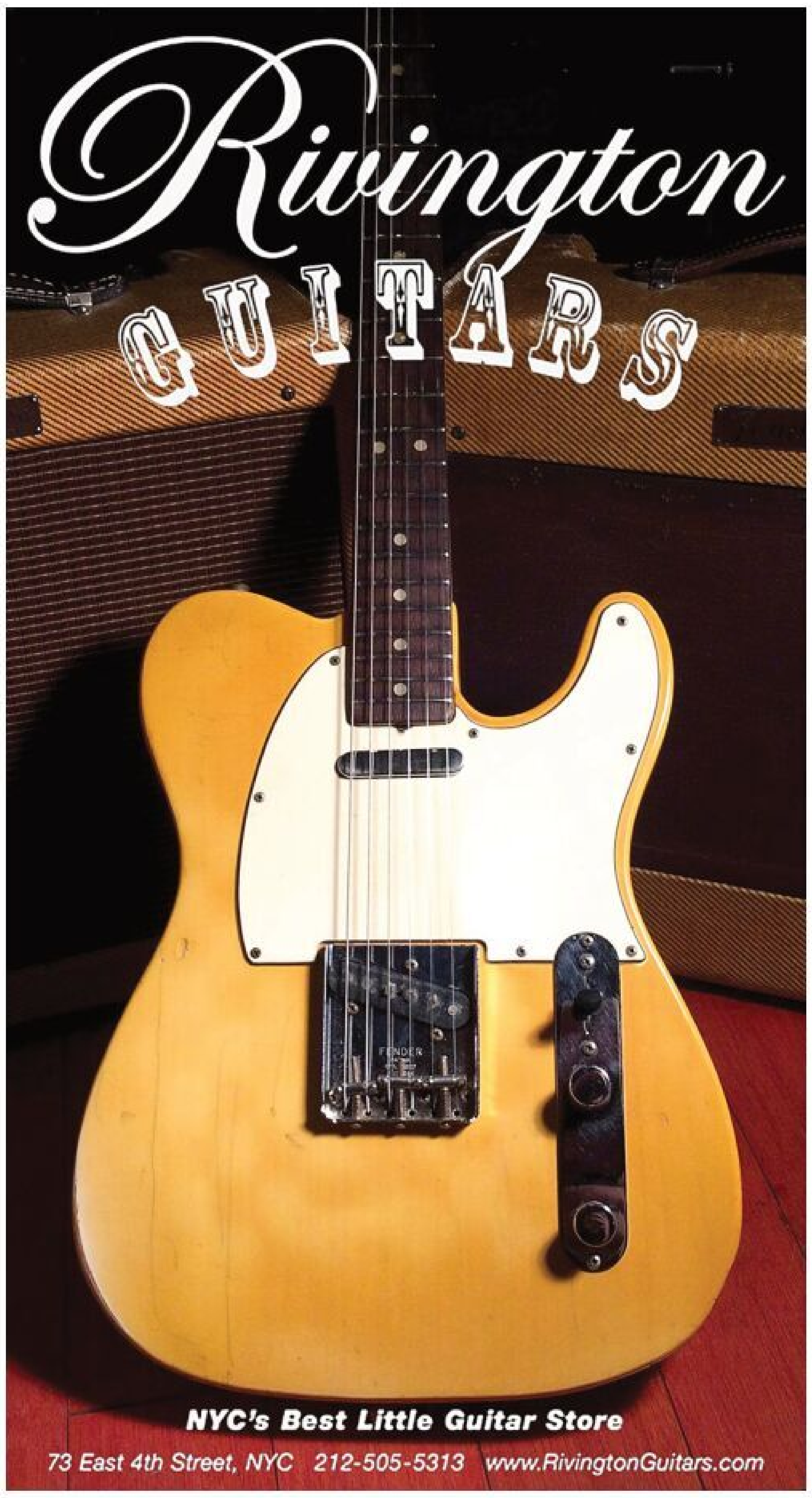

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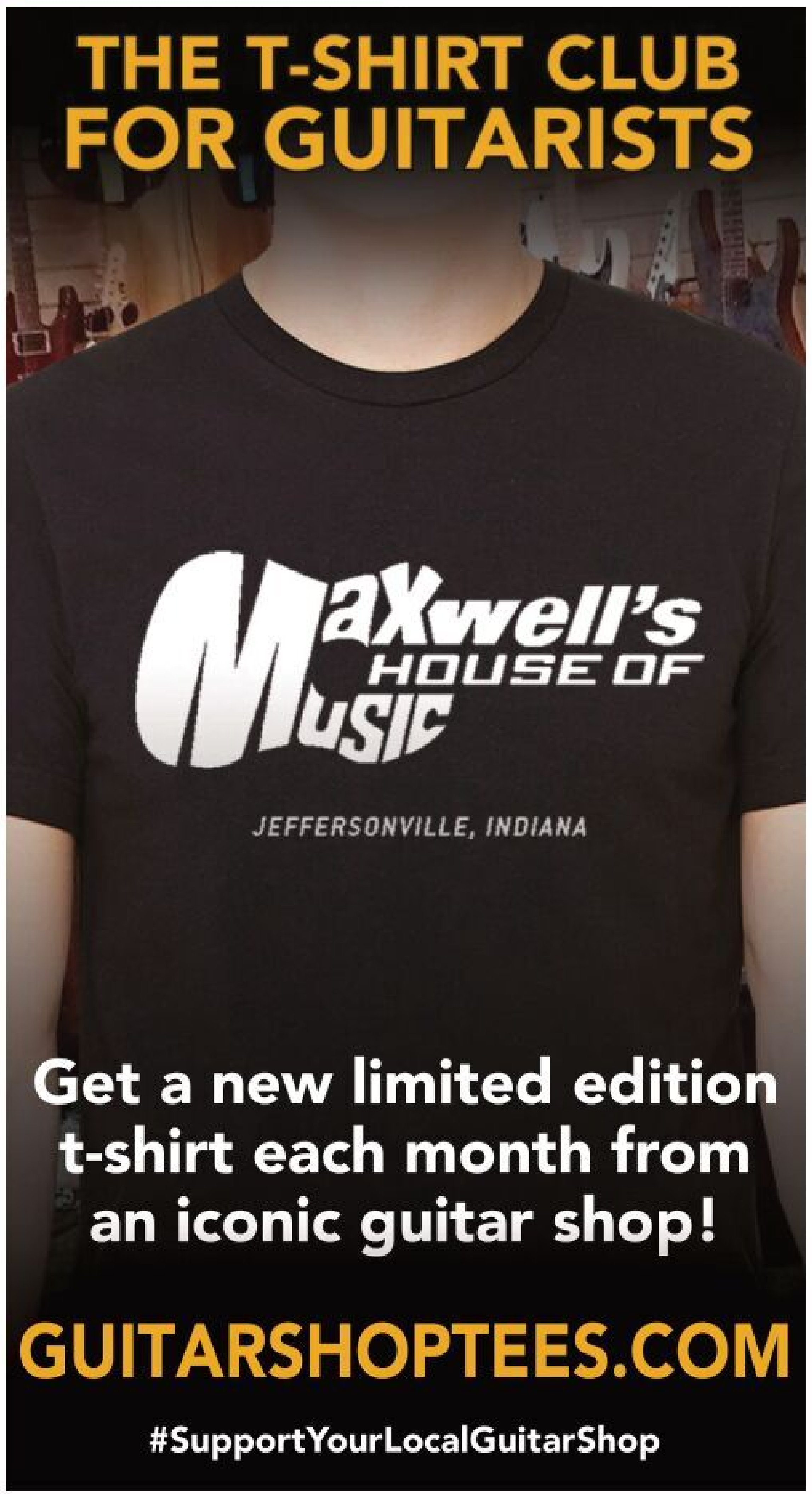

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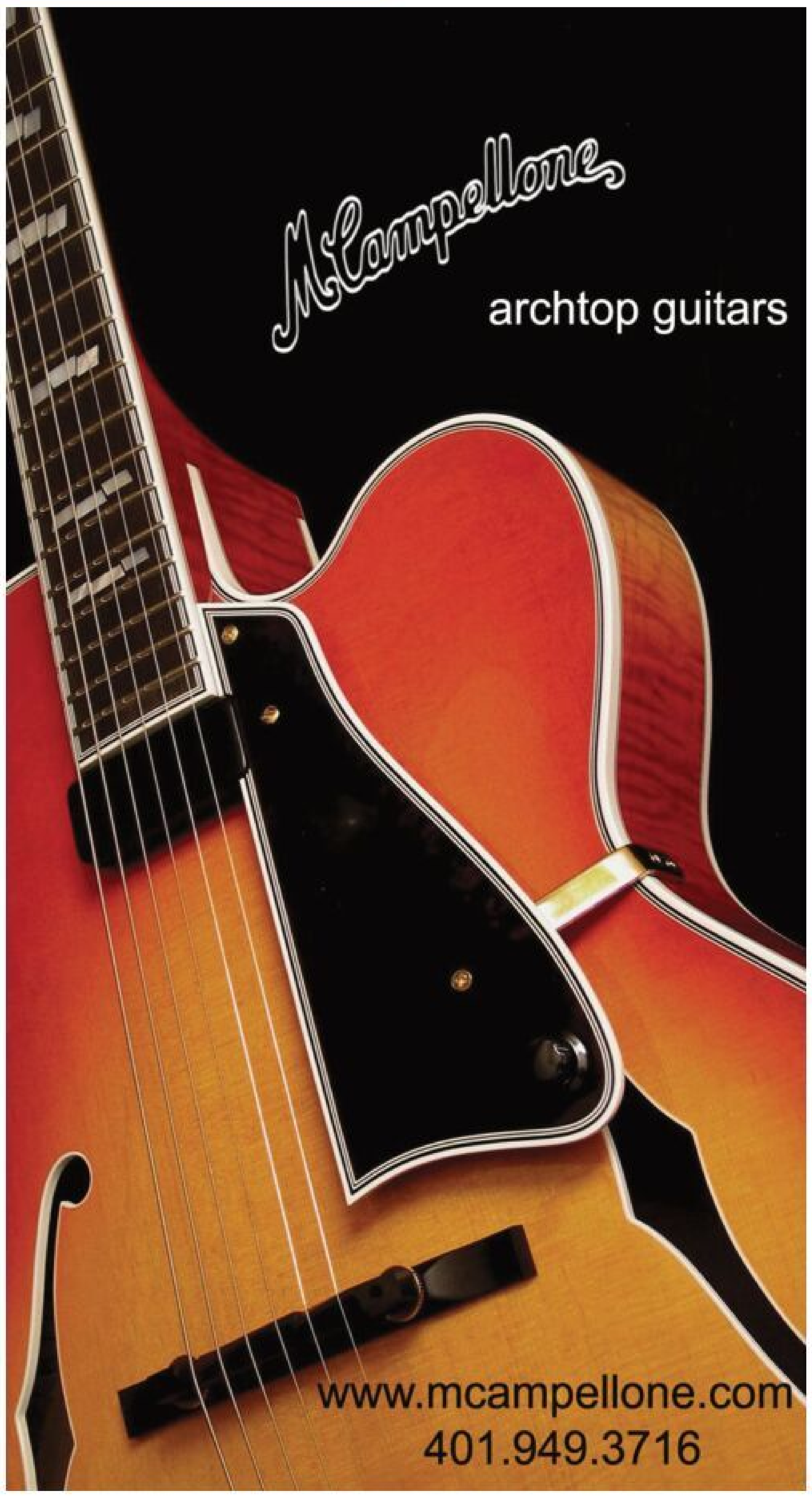

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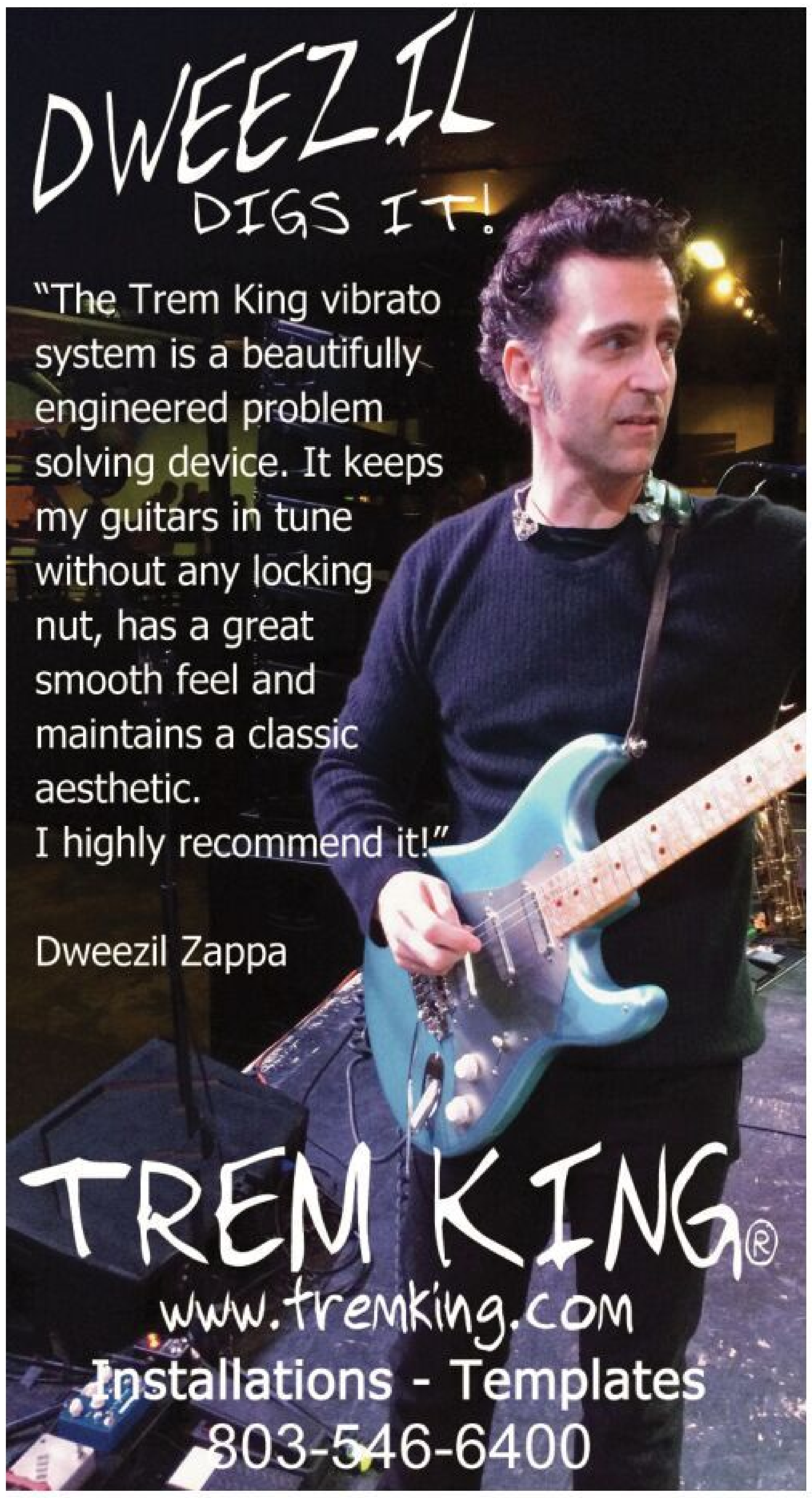
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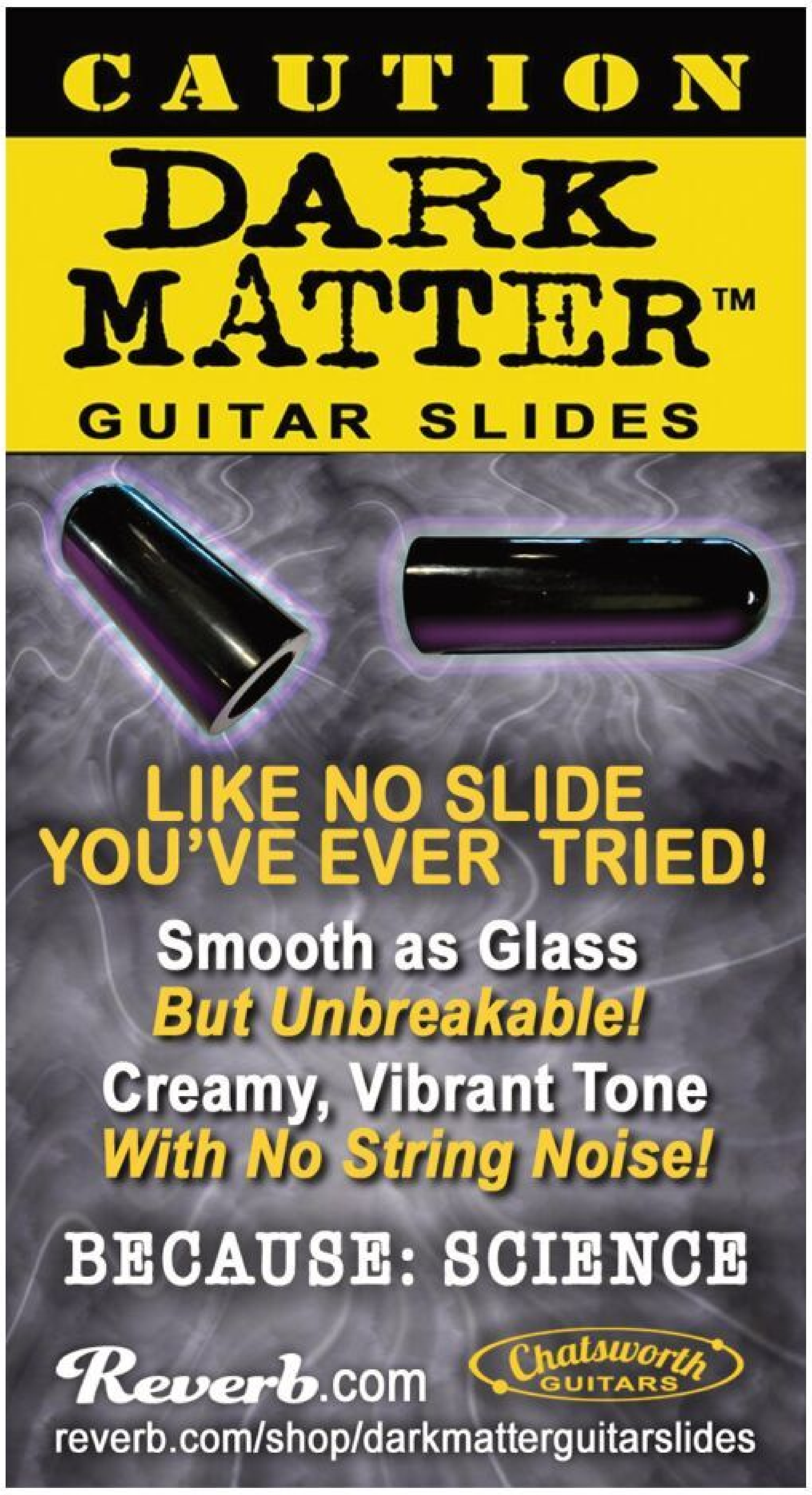
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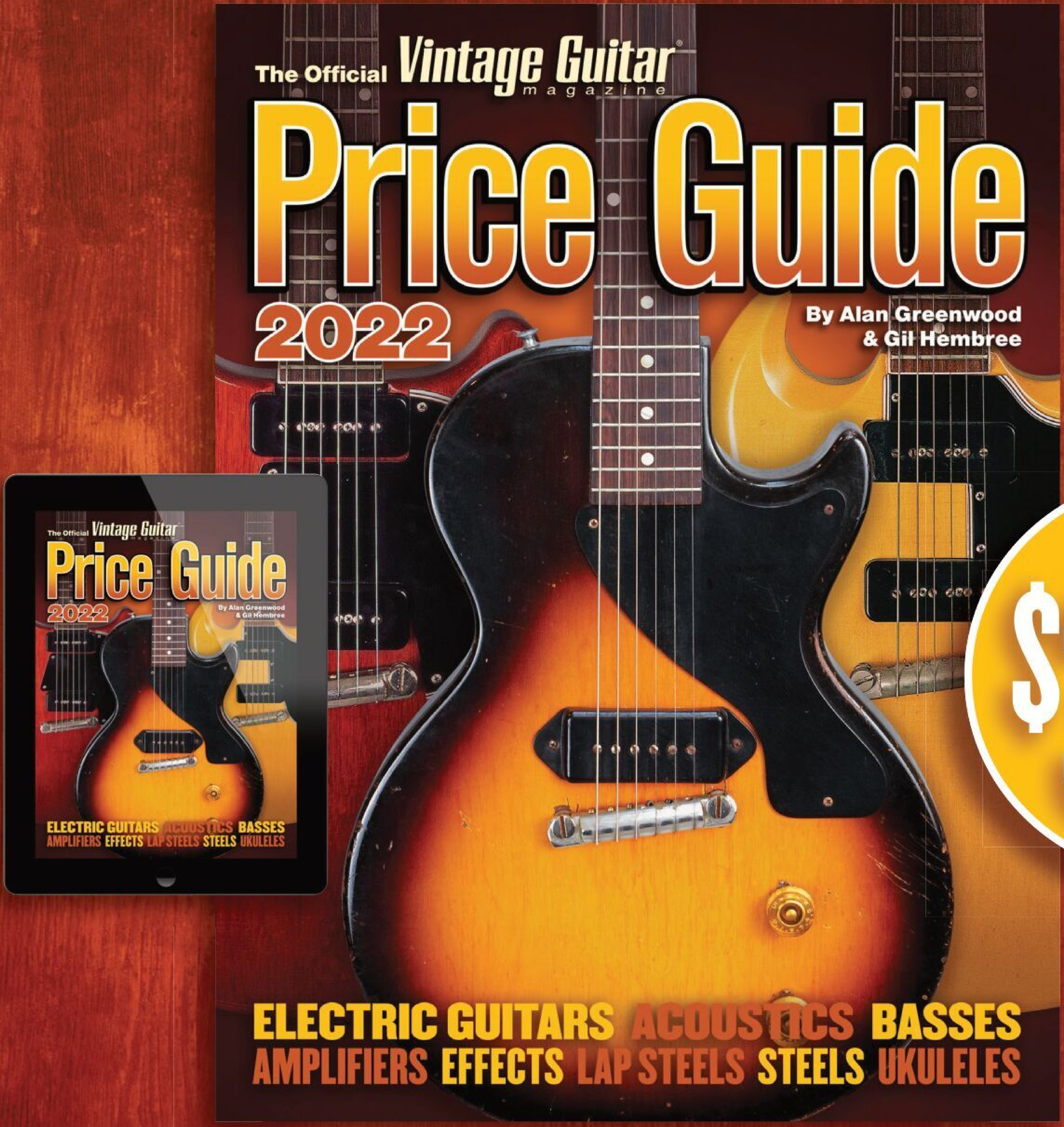

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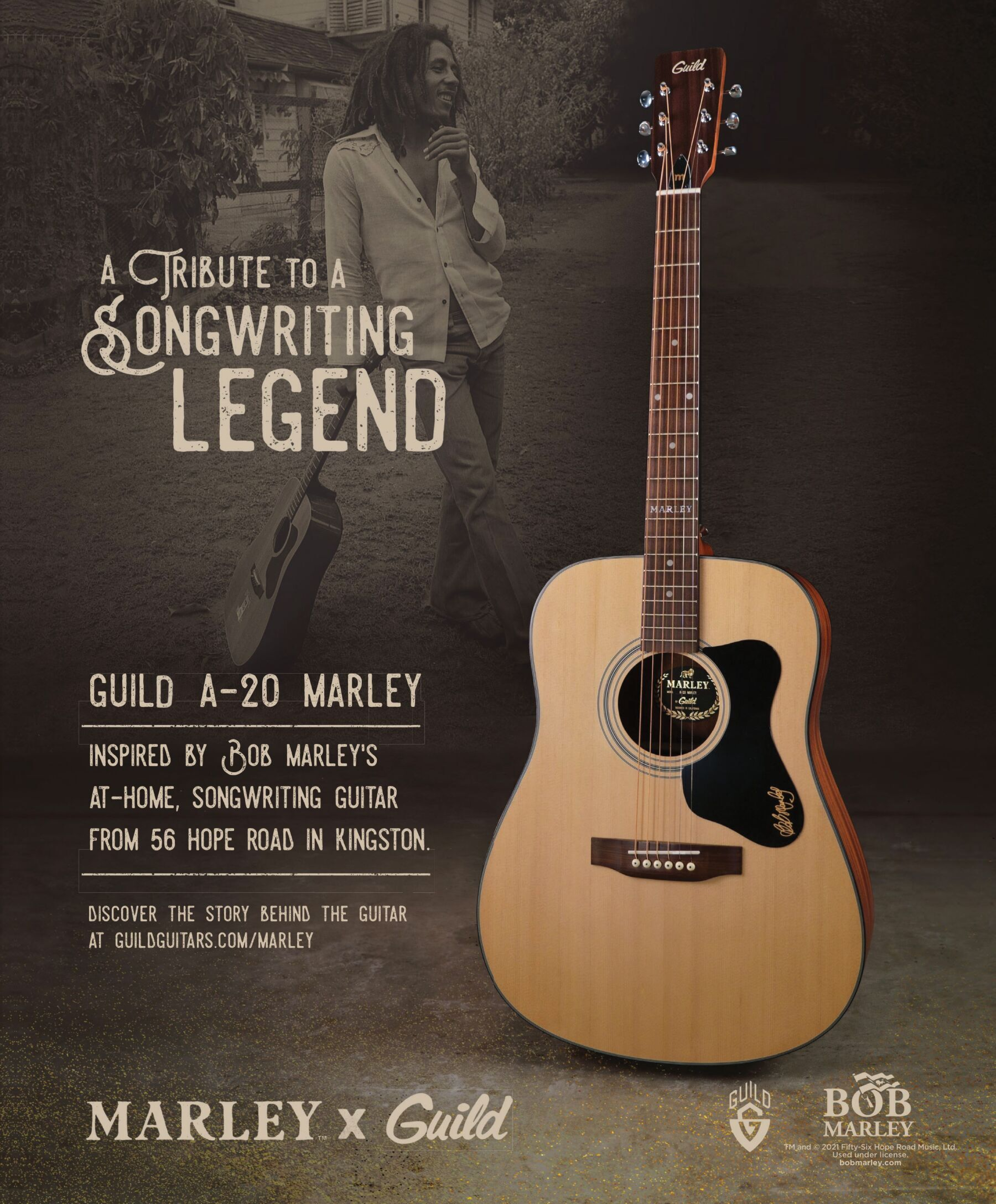

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1) Though he says, "I love Japanese Fender reissues!" longtime reader Jim Spellman appreciates many different guitars. From left, that's his mid-'80s Precision Bass, '06 Strat, '94 Jazzmaster, '90s Dano, '15 ES-330 '64 reissue, '99 ES-335, and an early-'70s Les Paul Deluxe. The amps are a Deluxe Reverb reissue and an '82 JCM 800 4010.

2) Darreld Shepel sent this look at the most-senior of his guitars – a '31 National Duolian, a mid-'30s resonator made in Canada, and a refinished late-'30s Hensel Minerva. "They're all 12-frets that play and sound great," Darreld said. "I'm proud to be their player."

3) Jeff Ross' guitar menagerie includes (top, from left) a '53 Epiphone Zephyr Emperor and '46 Epiphone Broadway, along with two Stewart-MacDonald kit semi-hollows, an Oscar Schmidt OE40N, Taylor Academy 12e, Maestro Macinach, '82 Global, Epiphone 3/4 bass, a StewMac kit dreadnought, Kentucky mandolin, and a Martin Custom X series. On the floor are a '93 Uribe classical and two acoustics he uses as art pieces.

4) Longtime subscriber Randy Barnett calls this shot "Bakersfield Reunion." It's his '67 Mosrite Joe Maphis doubleneck and 1970 Rosac amp. Don't miss the feature on Melobar in this issue, which digs into the Mosrite/Rosac connection!

5) Dean Athens' G&L basses showcase Leo Fender's evolving designs. From left they are an '82 L-1000, '86 El Toro, and a '91 L-2000.

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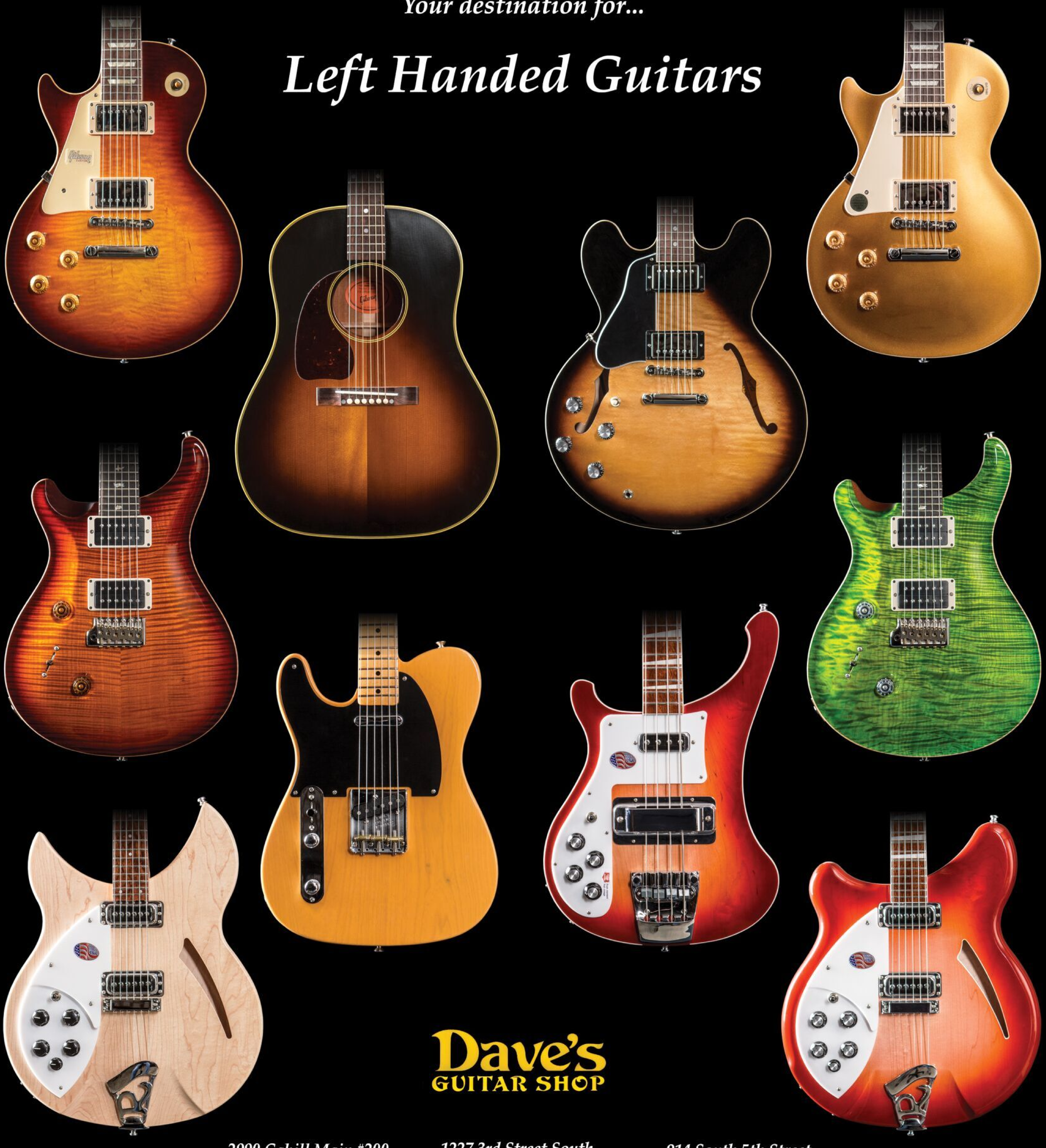

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